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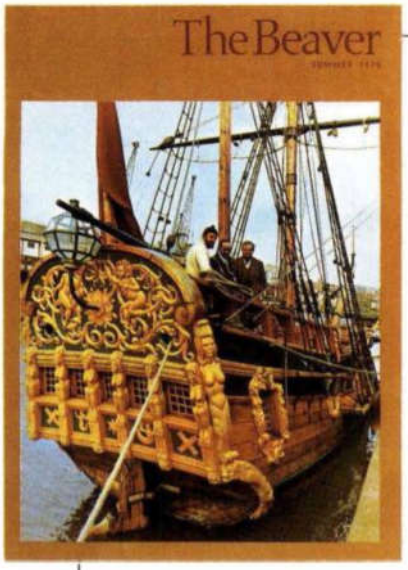
The Beaver

EXPLORING · CANADA'S · HISTORY

Parliament in Flames • Who Marched With Wolfe? Emily Stowe, Medical Pioneer



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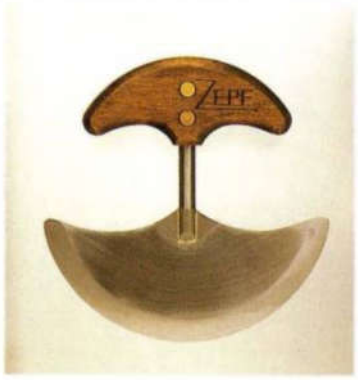

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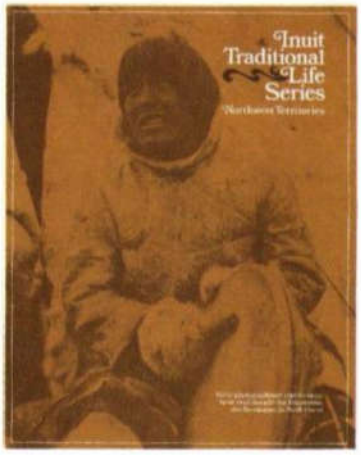

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The Beaver

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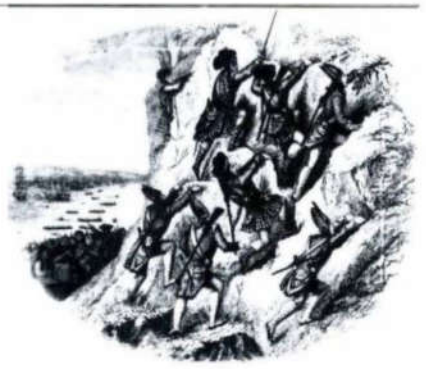


The Ghosts of Parliament Hill

"Parliament in Flames" — it might be a sensational newspaper headline describing an intense political battle on Parliament Hill; the notorious pipeline debate of 1956 or recent disputes over free trade and the Constitution. Few Canadians now remember that on a windy winter night in 1916 the words "Parliament in flames" were literally true.

Beginning on page six of this issue, Ron Hotchkiss writes of the events of that terrible night when the great Italian Gothic "House of Commons Building", the pride of the Dominion, was consumed in smoke and flames in one of the most spectacular and dramatic fires that the nation had ever seen. The poet Duncan Campbell Scott described the scene as "terrifying and beautiful". As he watched the rapidly moving flames engulf the fifty-year-old edifice, he may have thought of all the ghosts and all the memories that were being swept away on the black smoke.

The oldest ghosts and memories went all the way back to 1866 when the last Parliament of Upper and Lower Canada met in the gleaming new building to debate the measures that would lead to Confederation in the following year. That House has been described as one of the most able in Canadian history, a "Parliament of all the talents", and a roll-call of its members yields up names that still reverberate after more than a century.

To the right of the Speaker is John A. Macdonald, soon to preside over the new nation and now leading the last Parliament of the United Canadas. His moment of triumph lies just ahead. Near him on the front bench sits George-Étienne Cartier, once a Liberal reformer, now firmly tied as Macdonald's ally and destined to hold high office in the Conservative cabinet after Confederation. Nearby is Alexander Galt, once a Liberal but now firmly in the Macdonald camp after joining the Great Coalition of 1864 to strive for British North American unity. Seated farther along is the Irishman D'Arcy McGee, who will live only long enough to see the new nation born and then die at the hands of an assassin. Other faces come into view: Hector Langevin, able and astute, yet destined to see his political career ruined in two scandals; Richard Cartwright, an imposing, bewhiskered figure, strongly allied to Macdonald now, but one day to break away and sit with the Liberals, a free-trader and a relentless foe of his old chieftain.

To the left of the Speaker in that long-vanished pre-Confederation Parliament sits the remnant of the Liberal Party. Some of their former colleagues are serving with Macdonald to see Confederation in, but a rump sits aloof on the Opposition side of the chamber. George Brown is there, once allied to Macdonald in the Great Coalition, yet now estranged. This will be his last Parliament. Defeat lies ahead at the first post-Confederation election and he will be denied the honours that he has worked so long to earn. Macdonald needed him once, but he does not need him now. His star is falling.

Among the faces on the left is the bland countenance of Alexander Mackenzie — plain Sandy — dreaming, perhaps, of another day when he will sit in Macdonald's place and govern the young Dominion. Few in the House that day will bet on his chances for high office.

It is difficult to imagine the new Parliament building in pre-Confederation Ottawa. Most contemporary views of the edifice show little of the surrounding city. There was not much else to see and the Italian Gothic palace that rose above the river must have been as exotic as a peacock in a hen house. The streets around it were muddy and the surrounding buildings were what you would expect to find in a raw frontier town. The hotel accommodation was austere. Just getting there was an adventure for the members of Parliament who were more used to the relatively civilized comforts of Kingston, Montreal and Toronto. To reach Ottawa by train you had to change at Prescott and passengers were expected to lend a hand when the wood-burning locomotive stopped to take on fuel. It took two days to travel from Kingston along the Rideau Canal and one to journey by steamboat along the Ottawa River from Montreal.

The house rose on 15 August 1866 and in December representatives of the soon-to-be-united colonies assembled in London to help make final arrangements. The title "Dominion of Canada" was selected at the suggestion of Samuel Tilley of New Brunswick.

On 1 July 1867 they were all back in Ottawa to launch the new Dominion, Macdonald and several others with new titles. When the old House reassembled it was "Sir John" and "Sir George" and "Sir Alexander". The magnificent Parliament Buildings became the focal point of the new Dominion. The Victorian Age was still in its high noon and the sun was shining on the new capital of Canada.

On 18 September the newly-created "Sir John" and his colleagues won the first post-Confederation election, although a sour note was heard in the province of Nova Scotia where a number of separatists won election. The mood was buoyant, however, when the first Parliament of the new nation met in Ottawa on 6 November 1867. Apart from the congratulatory speeches and the enjoyment of the new titles, it was a "housekeeping" and "donkeywork" session that lasted until just before Christmas. Members discussed the creation of government departments and there was a

Sir Richard Cartwright
by Henri Julien

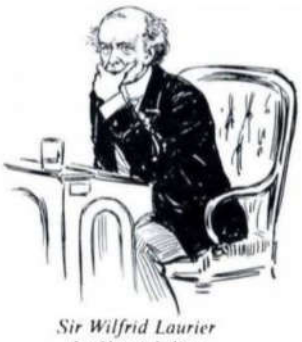
resolution calling for the admission of Rupert's Land and the North-West Territories. It was a happy beginning and in the euphoria of the moment it was undoubtedly assumed that the years ahead would be roses all the way in the best-of-all-possible Dominions and the best-of-all-possible Gothic Parliament Buildings. The remnant of the Great Coalition was still seated to the right of the Speaker in the great and ornate cube that was the Commons Chamber and there were hopes that this would be, for the future, a House of harmony and common purpose. Down the hall in the red Senate Chamber the portrait of Queen Victoria was beaming down with approval from its gilt frame.

No government, however, can expect to function for long in a rosy glow of universal esteem and approbation and hard reality swiftly asserted itself.

During the remaining years of the century the old Houses of Parliament would see much drama and not a little acrimony. Here the great scandal over the financing of the railway to the Pacific would break and wash Macdonald from office. Here Sir Hector Langevin would be disgraced. In the Commons Chamber Macdonald would clash with Mackenzie, Edward Blake and Wilfrid Laurier. There would be struggle and bitterness over the fate of Louis Riel, the disposition of Jesuit lands, the North-West Rebellion and the Manitoba Schools Question. Macdonald would see his great coalition with the *Parti Bleu* collapse and the old order come to an end. Laurier would break himself against the rock of Reciprocity and Robert Borden would lead his country into a World War.

As the flames tore through the fabric of the old building in 1916 the echo of some of those lost debates might have been heard amid the roar of the flames: Laurier and Sir John Thompson debating the fate of Riel; the venom of Sir Richard Cartwright pouring over his old enemy Macdonald; diatribes for and against Macdonald's National Policy; tributes occasioned by the untimely death, in England, of Prime Minister John Thompson and hours and hours of ripe oratory in a golden age of orators.

Armies of politicians and public figures passed through the stately building during its 50-year lifetime. Louis Riel MP crept in and out unseen. Sir William Mulock, first elected in 1882, lived to see the old building burn and was still taking an active interest in public events in 1944 when he died, aged 100. Clifford Sifton hatched his plans to people the prairies with immigrants from Eastern Europe in the old building. Donald A. Smith served here as an MP in the 1870s before moving on, as Lord Strathcona, to a dominating position in the greater world of business and international finance. They were all part of the army of the famous and the long-forgotten who haunted the corridors of the old "House of Commons Building" until a careless spark brought in the inferno on the night of 3 February 1916.



Sir Wilfrid Laurier
by Henri Julien

When the ashes had cooled and Parliament had reassembled in its temporary quarters at the Victoria Memorial Museum, a headline in a Toronto newspaper commented: "Old Fossils Join Older Fossils in Museum". The stable universe of the Founding Fathers was being swept away by the flames of war. When the post-war Parliamentarians assembled in the building we know today, they faced a changed and uncertain world.

— Christopher Dafoe

PARLIAMENT IN FLAMES, 1916

'Terrifying and Beautiful'

By Ron Hotchkiss

"Like a crack out of the blue came the news tonight that the Parlt Bldgs at Ottawa were on fire."

Journalist M.O. Hammond's entry in his diary for Thursday, 3 February 1916, was typical of the shock most Canadians experienced when first learning about the disaster. As parliamentary correspondent for the *Globe* between 1903 and 1906, Hammond had formed a close attachment to the Centre Block where he had worked and played. For him and other Press Gallery reporters, MPs, and senators, it was affectionately called, "The House of Commons Building". In a reflective essay written shortly after the fire, he recalled:

> As a social institution the Parliament Buildings were pre-eminent. They formed a gigantic club. . . . Whether in the noisy cafe, the stately dining-room of the Speaker, or among the slippered elders on the Senate side, the spirit of good fellowship reigned constantly, overstepping party lines.

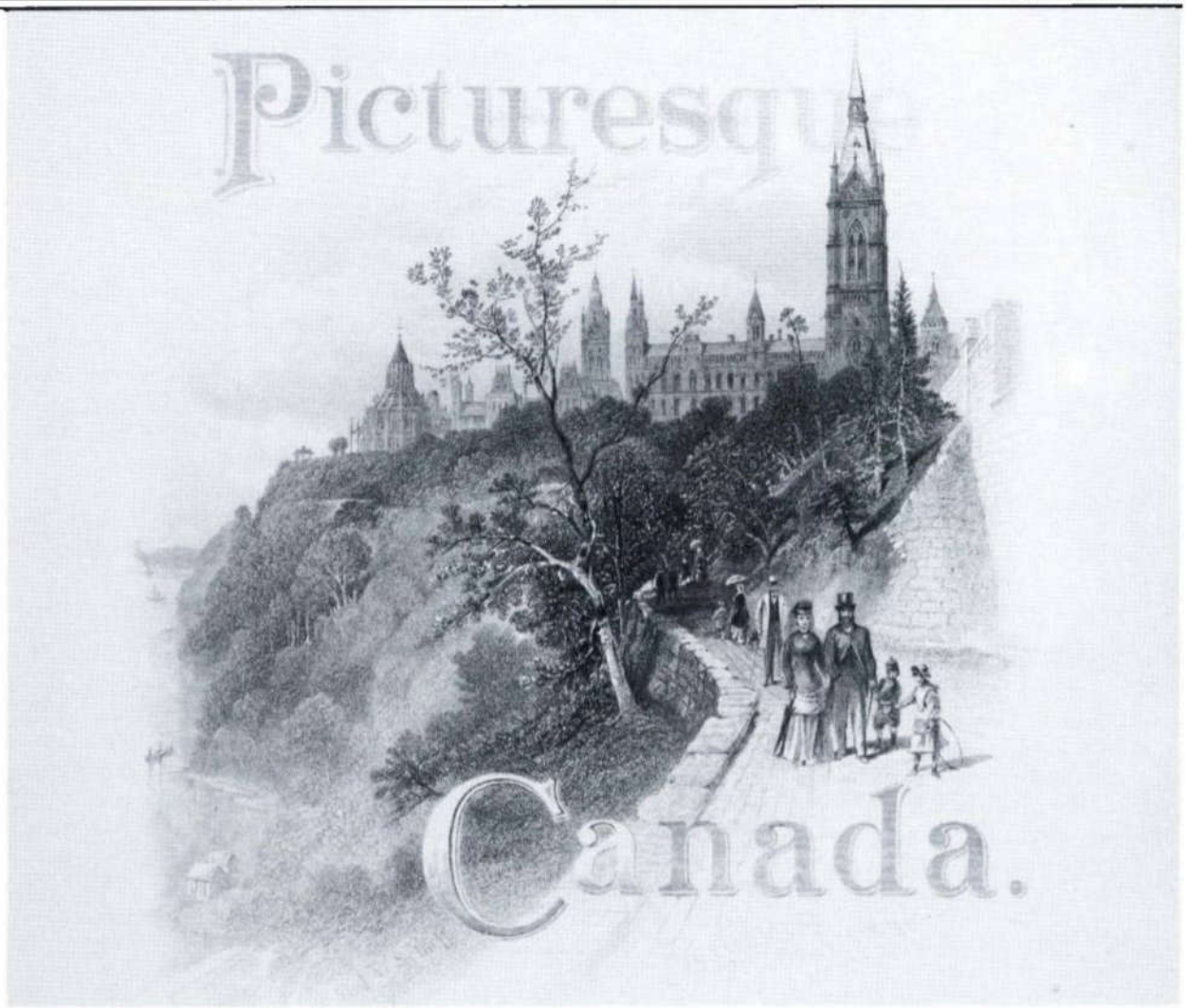
The original Centre Block was designed by architects Thomas Fuller and Chilion Jones of Toronto. Their plan, chosen from sixteen others submitted in public competition in 1859, was Italian Gothic in style. It was selected because it captured the spirit and feeling of the new capital. It harmonized with the site, Barrack Hill, a rocky promontory rising 150 feet above the Ottawa River. Finally, the architectural style expressed the country's close ties with Britain by taking as its model the Houses of Parliament in London. Yet, despite its choice, the design did raise some concerns. Samuel Keefer and F.P. Rubidge, the individuals responsible for selecting the winning entry, awarded it respectively only six and three points out of ten for safety against fire.

The first sod was turned on 20 December 1859, and almost immediately the contractors were in trouble. Because of problems in the underlying rock, it was necessary to excavate to a much greater depth than had been expected. Also, the stone needed for the building had to be quarried and shipped from distant and diverse locations: sandstone from Ohio and New York; slate from Vermont; and the bulk of the stone for the exterior of the building from Nepean Township, twelve miles west of Ottawa. As the municipality of Ottawa was unable to provide water, it was drawn from the Ottawa River; a six-horsepower steam engine and pump at the base of Parliament Hill served this purpose.

During the next six years, as the Houses of Parliament and the two departmental buildings rose on the site, so did the costs and controversy. Work stopped altogether in 1861. It wasn't until 1863 that it began again after a Royal Commission of Inquiry recommended that the original contractors be given new contracts. By October 1865 the buildings were deemed sufficiently complete that the first group of civil servants began to arrive from Quebec City to commence the tasks of government. One civil servant, however, was not impressed with the new quarters. After touring the site, Edmund Meredith caustically judged the government buildings, "fit for habitation in fifty years time, but certainly not before." Yet, his was a minority opinion. Most felt as George Brown, who wrote effusively about the new structures to his wife:

> . . . . Went at once to the Public Buildings. . . . They are really magnificent. Fit for the British, French & Russian Empires were they all confederated! A hundred years hence, the people will fancy the men of these days giants in imagination if not ability. The architecture is something like the Toronto University but infinitely finer. The work is beautiful & of the most substantial character. . . .

When the first parliament for the Province of Canada celebrated its opening on 6 June 1866, it was in a chamber significantly different from the one of today. The Commons Chamber was a high cube-like room with galleries on all sides and lighted from above by chandeliers and on the sides by long, narrow Gothic windows. Alexander Mackenzie, the country's second prime minister, never felt comfortable in the room. He



Canadians were proud of their new Parliament Buildings at the dawn of Confederation. In this engraving from "Picturesque Canada" (1882), the Italian Gothic buildings dominate the skyline while Ottawa families walk the adjacent parkland above the river.

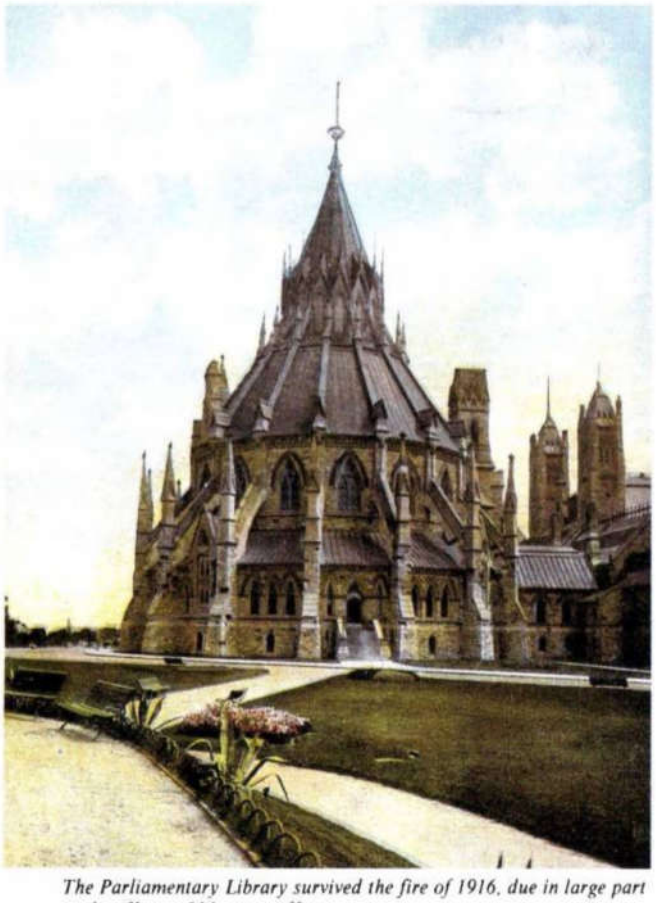
once referred to the House of Commons as a kind of cave, whose windows were illusions as they could not be opened. This feeling of suffocation was made worse by a ventilation system that pumped air through underground ducts over two hundred yards long. Many felt the ducts and the sewers had too much in common.

There were no private offices except for cabinet ministers. Thus, the inhabitants of the building — newspapermen, civil servants, MPs, and Senators — were in constant and intimate contact, creating a much friendlier atmosphere than the current structure. Room 16, just across the corridor from the House of Commons, on the west side, served as the meeting place for government MPs and supporters. Further west, the smaller Room 6 provided for the Opposition. Other rooms, mainly upstairs, were set aside for provincial groups. There, in time, the Nova Scotia men might be found scheming for a larger fish market, the Prince Edward Islanders for a tunnel, or the Ontario interests for a bigger share of war contracts.

In direct contrast to the hustle and bustle of the Lower House, the Senate was almost another world completely, light years removed from the hurly-burly of political strife. In describing Senate life, Hammond conveys a feeling of what it was like:

> Here one passed from noisy linoleum floors to heavy carpets, and red at that! One padded along the corridors with the same noiselessness as the Last Leaf himself. In these almost empty crimson quarters, to speak aloud seemed a sacrilege. Paintings of grim statesmen of the past looked down from the corridor walls and seemed to impose the reverence of a sterner age. Octogenarian Senators basked in slippered ease in comfy rooms or delved gently into current

In this contemporary postcard view the House of Commons Chamber is seen from the government benches. The press gallery is directly above the Speaker's throne, with the public galleries above them on all four sides of the room.

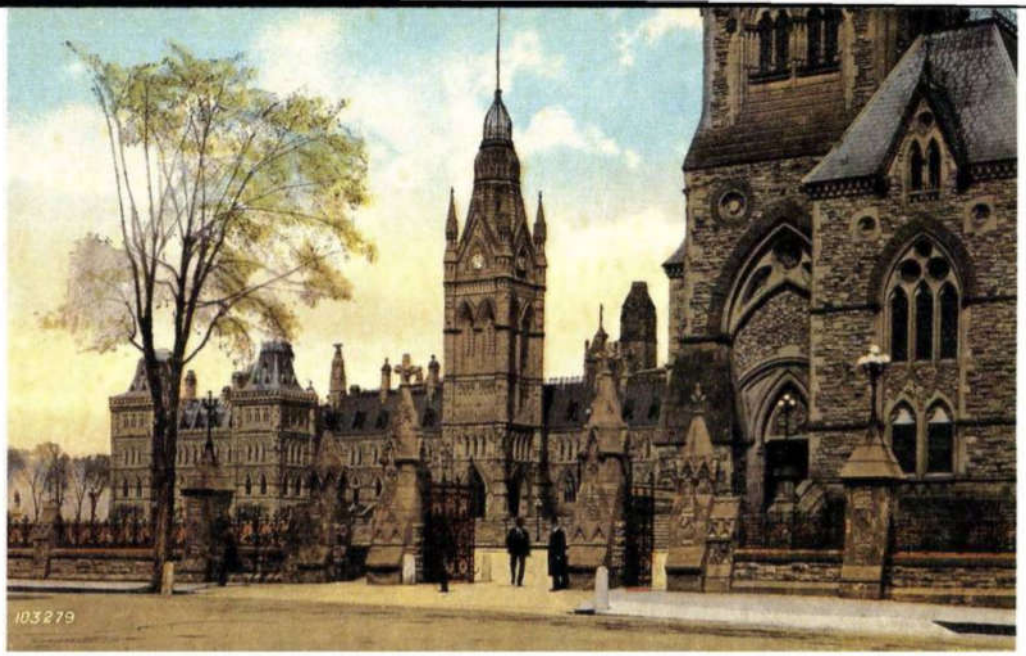


The Parliamentary Library survived the fire of 1916, due in large part to the efforts of library staff.

literature in the reading room, but it all seemed unreal in the world of an energetic and pushing nation. In session their speech was measured, respectful and slow, compared with the feuds and scrimmages of the House, except once in a decade or so when one Nova Scotian dared to call another "an old viper".

When the Government Buildings were opened, cattle grazed on Parliament Hill. Ottawa was still very much a rough-and-ready lumber town. During the next fifty years, however, the Gothic structure with its distinctive central spire became a familiar and picturesque landmark of the capital. Within its walls the great issues and events of the day were debated: Confederation; the Pacific Scandal, the Riel rebellions, the Manitoba Schools Question. Here, also, a tradition of government was created and nurtured by the politicians of the time — Macdonald, Brown, Tupper, Howe, Cartier, and Laurier. Indeed, the story of the House of Commons building was the story of Canadian nationhood. And now it was burning down.

The fire had started in the worst possible location — the House of Commons Reading Room. Lying midway between the Commons Chamber and the Senate, it was in the exact centre of the main building. It was a small room, about fifty feet long and less than twenty feet in width. The interior was mainly pine, "beautifully carved and panelled, and finished 'bright'." It contained six double reading desks, surrounded by shelves on which were filed current issues of every newspaper and magazine of the country. In addition, there were numerous legal volumes and law records stuffed into whatever space remained. The room had in recent years proven inadequate for its purpose.



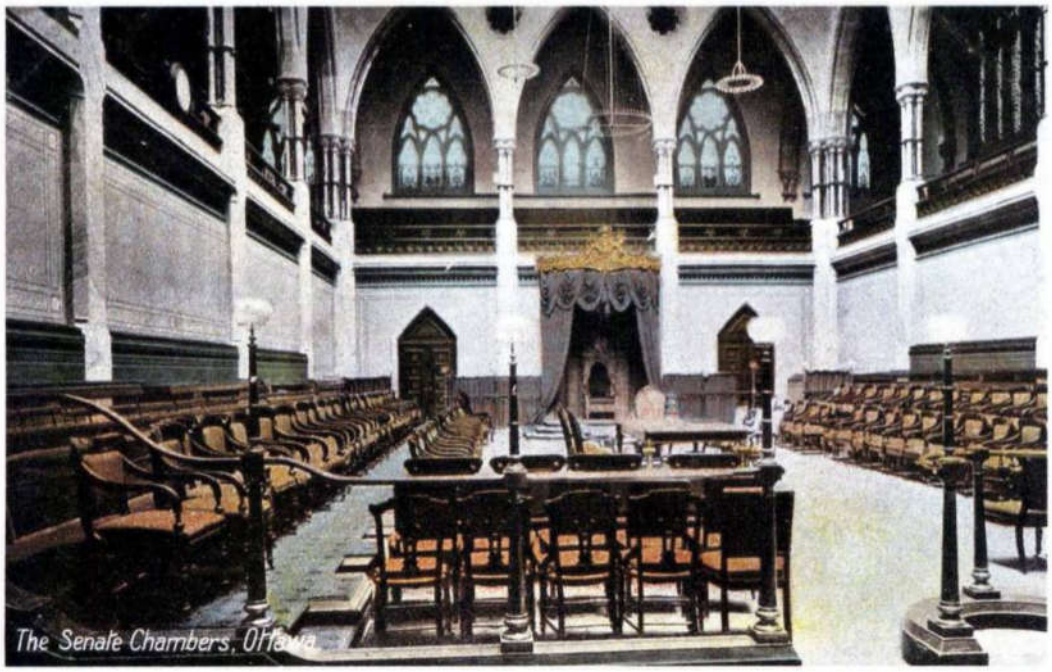
The old Parliament Buildings as seen from the East Gate. The building in the right foreground survived the fire and is still in use. For the same view with the Centre Block that we know today, see page 17.

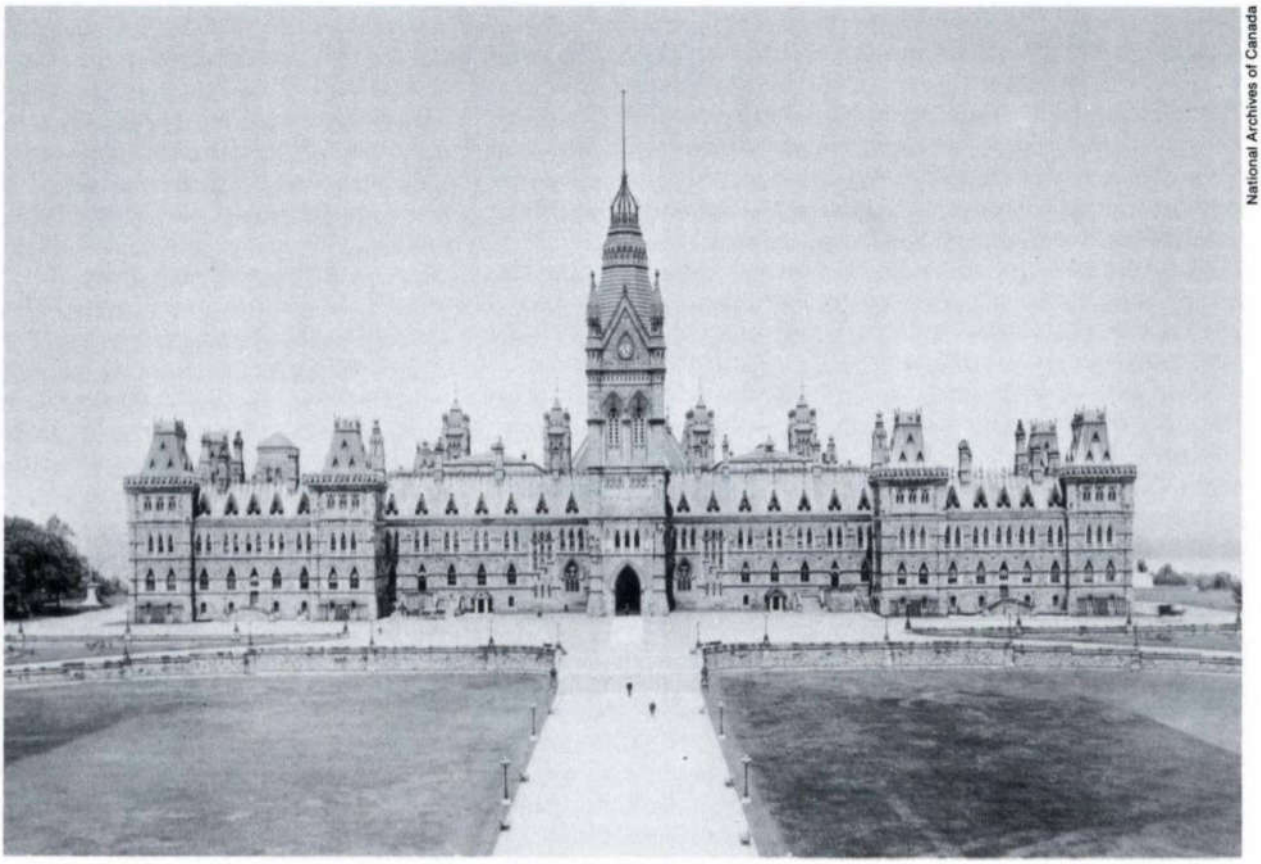
Nevertheless, it continued in use as it provided a quiet retreat where MPs could relax and catch up on the news from the home ridings.

Doors opened from the reading room into the private offices of three cabinet ministers: Hon. C.J. Doherty, Minister of Justice; Hon. Dr. J.D. Reid, Minister of Customs; and Hon. Martin Burrell, Minister of Agriculture. Beyond the reading room, at the end of a corridor, was the Library of Parliament.

Sometime between 8:45 p.m. and 8:55 p.m., on 3 February 1916 Mme. Verville, wife of the Member for Maisonneuve, was standing reading a paper in the room. She looked up and "saw a sheet of flame flash along the whole length of one side of the room." She dropped the paper and dashed out of the room into the corridor. Also present was Frank Glass, Member for East Middlesex. His attention was drawn from the newspaper he was reading by a current of hot air.

The floor of the Senate Chamber. While the fire raged through the House of Commons, Senate staff and soldiers worked frantically to remove paintings and furniture from this room. Much was saved before the fire swept in.





National Archives of Canada

The imaginative use of stone was one of the most impressive characteristics of the old Centre Block. Red sandstone from Potsdam, New York, was used for window and door trim. The exterior buff-coloured sandstone was quarried at nearby Nepean Township. The roofing was dark grey slate, relieved by slate of light green from Vermont.

Turning around, he saw flames rising from one of the desks.

He rushed into the Commons corridor where he encountered Thomas Moore, one of the Dominion policemen on duty. Moore entered the room and, believing the fire not serious, crossed to the Senate side and obtained an extinguisher. When he returned a few seconds later, he found that the fire had spread so rapidly that the extinguisher had no effect. By this time, Sergeant Edward Carroll — in charge of the police on duty at the House of Commons — and two others had arrived and were attempting to get the hose that was stationed at the Speaker's door into action. The smoke and flame had become so intense, however, that they were forced to abandon it. Moving to the west corridor, they hurriedly unwound another hose and began to use it against the blaze. Other constables and the caretaker of the Senate Reading Room also had a hose operating from the Senate side. Nevertheless, the quantity of paper and varnished wood in the reading room produced smoke so dense that the men were forced away from that part of the building. More significantly, they now realized that the fire was serious and the building would have to be evacuated.

At 8:57 p.m. the automatic fire alarms began to sound and the firemen at Number 8 fire station located behind City Hall quickly responded to the call. When they arrived on Parliament Hill three minutes later they saw smoke pouring from the windows and flames shooting forty to fifty feet into the night sky above the Centre Block. Excited spectators were already rushing towards the scene.

In the House of Commons shortly before, about thirty-five members, fifty to seventy-five visitors, and less than a half-dozen newspapermen were wearily following a debate on fish. It was the first "private members' day" of the session and W.S. Loggie, Member for Northumberland, New Brunswick, was speaking on the means for promoting the Canadian fish industry. The Deputy-Speaker, Edgar Rhodes, elected to the position five hours before, was presiding over his first session. Then, as one reporter described it:

> Upon this quiet scene there suddenly burst Frank Glass of Middlesex. He almost plunged through the Sergeant-at-Arms' door, and the members were almost petrified with astonishment to hear him shout: "The building is all on fire: get out as quickly as you can."

National Archives of Canada

The terrible illumination of raging fire lights up the doomed Centre Block. The inferno has a firm grip and is moving relentlessly up the Victoria Tower.

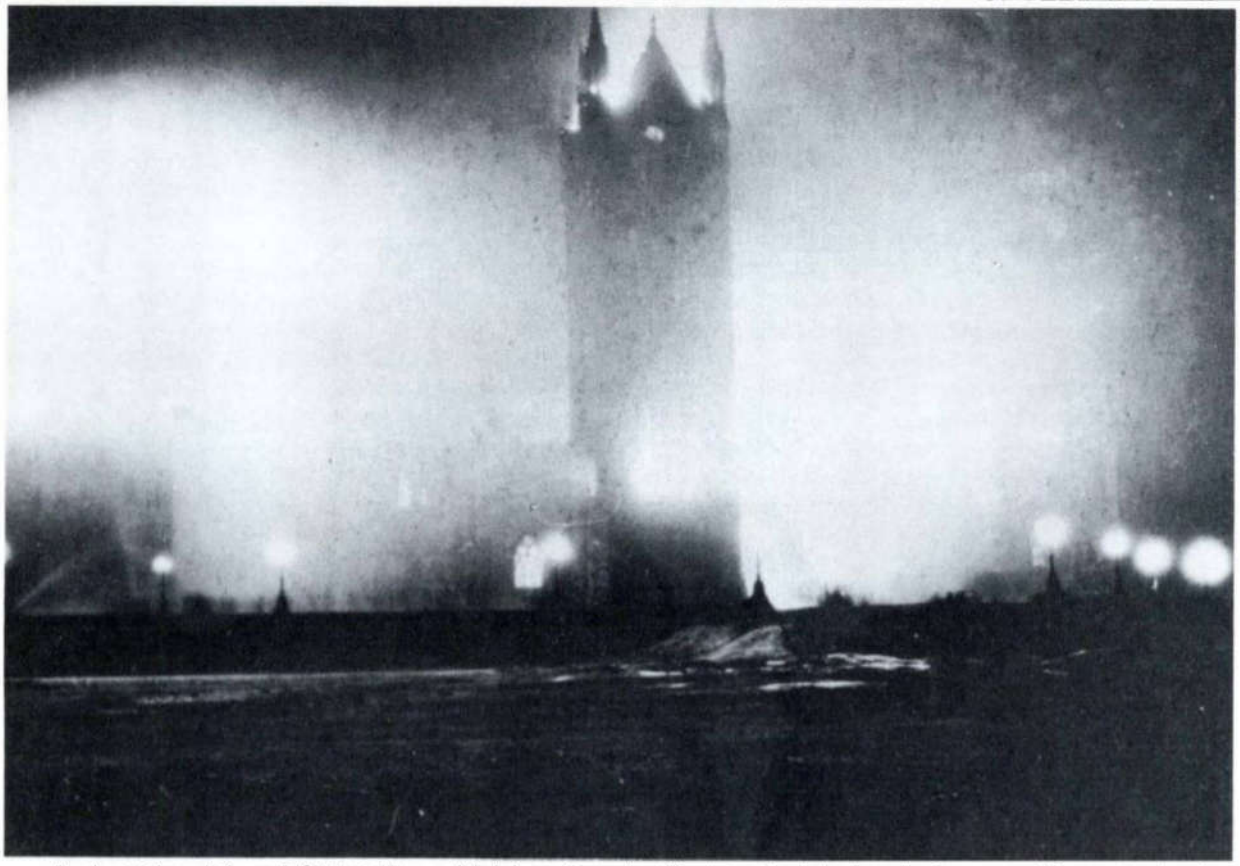
Others remember the alarm being given by Glass and Mederic Martin, Member for Montreal, St. Mary's, while others attributed the first warning to Charles Stewart, Chief Doorkeeper for the House of Commons. Nevertheless, the signal produced no panic. Indeed, as there was no odour of smoke in the chamber, let alone the sight of fire, the members were almost leisurely in their efforts to leave. The Deputy-Speaker "unceremoniously rose and walked quietly out of the chamber". The members started locking their desks when someone else shouted, "Hurry for your lives, the building is burning down." Opening a door, they realized that the warnings were frighteningly real when a cloud of smoke and the roar of flames drove them back. They frantically searched for alternate means of escape. Some were able to leave by the members' side entrance on the Conservative side. For the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, J.D. Hazen, and another member, however, their departure was more harrowing. Forced away from the Sergeant-At-Arms' door by the smoke and flame, they realized, as Hazen put it that:

> It was a matter of life and death, and covering our faces with our hands we made a dash through the door under the Speaker's chair. We were met by dense black smoke through which lurid flame shot, and a heat so intense that our faces were scorched. But we knew that to turn back was death, so we kept ahead and finally reached the main House of Commons door.

One of the last to leave was Allan Baxter, the Assistant Chief Page. Remaining in the chamber until his pages had escaped, he attempted to reach the coat room. It was impossible. By now the flames had gathered momentum and were sweeping along the corridors, according to one witness, "like a prairie fire". Further, the dense and suffocating volumes of smoke which preceded the fire were effectively preventing all efforts to fight the conflagration from inside the building.

The Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden, had left the Commons Chamber approximately twenty minutes before. He was in his office with his secretary working on correspondence when, shortly after 9:00 p.m., an undersecretary rushed in to warn them of "an awful fire in the corridor". Borden described the scene when they left his office:

> We hurried out and in the corridor leading to the reading room there was a great volume of thick,



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Fire bursts through the roof of Victoria Tower, while below, a fierce glow illuminates the night sky as the Commons and Senate chambers burn.

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With the Centre Block obscured by smoke and flames, fire pumpers (left) continue the battle. Troops can be dimly seen behind the wall at right, while a horse-drawn wagon moves rapidly from the east side of the building, possibly transporting paintings and other valuables removed from the Senate Chamber in the final moments before the flames swept in.

black smoke through which darted long tongues of flame, accompanied by short, sharp sounds like explosions. The corridor leading past the Press Room was also filled with smoke and water was running over it.

Starting back to his office for his coat, Borden was stopped by the others and the three men were able to escape down the messengers' stairway and through their room.

In the entrance vestibule, the prime minister encountered some members and questioned them regarding the origin of the fire. He also witnessed the emergence of others, coughing and choking, from their escape out of the Commons Chamber. Alarmist reports were rife, and it was feared that many lives had been lost. Several times Borden stopped policemen and firemen to enquire after various MPs. Finally, the fire's spread made the area a danger zone, and the prime minister was "firmly but gently" asked to leave. The Honourable J.D. Hazen took him by the arm and led him outside where someone gave him a coat and somebody else a hat.

The Minister of Agriculture, Martin Burrell, was in his office adjoining the Reading Room going over correspondence with his secretary when they heard the cry of fire. They opened the door and were confronted by a mass of blazing wood and paper. Covering their faces with their arms, both men made a dash through the flaming room. They survived, but Burrell was badly burned about the hands and face.

Sir Thomas White, Minister of Finance, was more fortunate. He was with J.D. Reid, Minister of Customs, in the latter's office, also adjoining the Reading Room. On hearing the alarm, White attempted to retrieve his hat and coat from his office located a short distance away. But by now the fire, which "literally roared and rolled through the building", had created such dense smoke that many of the corridors were "as black as an Egyptian night". Turning back, White, together with Reid, was able to escape by the Senate corridor.

The fire's spread was so rapid that many of the building's inhabitants had to take extraordinary measures to escape. MPs Thomas MacNutt and Dr. Edward Cash found themselves trapped in a washroom. Seizing the towels in the lavatory, they fashioned a rope. Then, tying the rope to a stick used to open the windows, they provided a means of escape. Cash went first and was successful; although he fell the final twenty feet to the ground. MacNutt was about to go next when a caretaker, carrying a ladder, joined him. They lowered the ladder through the window until it was resting on the floor of the wall outside. This makeshift fire escape allowed both men to get out of the building safely.

When the second alarm sounded at 9:05 p.m., hundreds of onlookers rushed towards the hill, attracted by the fire engines and the flames and smoke issuing from the Centre Block. Those running towards the scene were met by a crowd of MPs stampeding down. Many were hatless and coatless; some had handkerchiefs tied about their heads; others had their coats up to cover their ears from the bitter wind. The faces of some showed the effects of their narrow escape. A number were asking after friends from whom they had become separated in the mad scramble for the exits.

Sir Sam Hughes, Minister of Militia and Defence, was giving a party at the Chateau Laurier when the fire broke out, but soon arrived on the scene to take charge.

Elsewhere in the city activities continued, their participants oblivious to the events transpiring on Parliament Hill. At the Chateau Laurier, the Minister of Militia, Sir Sam Hughes, was giving a private party. Dinner finished, one of the guests was entertaining the others with his delightful baritone voice. He was in the middle of singing "Where the Mountains of Mourne Come Down to the Sea," when the Chateau manager rushed in and announced that the Parliament Buildings were on fire. The thought was so ludicrous that it was treated as a joke. "We'll go up and put the fire out shortly. Now go away and don't bother us," was the reaction of several of those present. Sir Sam laughingly asked if Zeppelins had been responsible. Yet, shortly thereafter the commotion and general excitement outside convinced the minister and his guests to

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This is what Parliamentary Librarian Martin Griffin saw when he came to Parliament Hill on the morning after the fire. The sandstone façade had become a blackened, ice-covered ruin. The tower had collapsed and the Commons and Senate chambers had been destroyed.

investigate. What they found, according to Grattan O'Leary, a twenty-seven-year-old reporter for the *Ottawa Journal*, and a future senator, was a "pall of black smoke obscuring Parliament Hill".

O'Leary ran into the building, grabbed his typewriter, and made his way outside through smoke filled corridors. Another reporter, Harry Anderson of the *Toronto Globe* was just entering the building when two members, one after the other, hurried out hatless and coatless, shouting a warning. As no smoke or fire was visible, he thought that this was an over-reaction. Yet when he entered he, too, was met by waves of suffocating smoke which forced him to cover his nose with his handkerchief and grope his way back along hot walls to the entrance.

The parliamentary representative of *Le Reveil* and *Le Droit* had a more frightful experience. Albert Carle was in the press gallery when the alarm was given. Together with one of the stenographers, he rushed to the press room to get his overcoat and rubbers. When they came to leave they found it impossible to see because of the smoke. But there was no other means of escape. So both men crawled on their hands and knees along the corridor, eventually finding a door with the aid of a policeman who was shouting directions to them.

When Sir Sam Hughes arrived on the hill, the large unruly crowd which was gathering and the rapidity with which the fire was spreading convinced him that prompt action was necessary. Placing himself in charge, he ordered out the local battalion, the 77th, and the engineers who were stationed at the Exhibition building. Within a short time a cordon of soldiers and police had surrounded the flaming building. At first the lines were stretched along the wall in front of the main entrance, but as the fire grew in size the spectators were gradually forced back. Periodically, onlookers would shout warnings to the red-helmeted firemen as they fought to control the conflagration. But with each new outbreak the destruction of the historic building appeared inevitable.

Crowd control was one reason for the troops' presence. Another was the ominious rumours of incendiarism and German agents. Some witnesses stated they heard explosions prior to the rush of flames through the Commons Chamber. Others testified that strangers were seen in the building. Consequently, police were placed on alert for suspicious characters and no one was allowed within fifty yards of the fire.

Reporters and photographers, however, were exempted from this rule and were permitted to wander perilously close in their efforts to report the tragedy. Frequently, telegraph boys would appear outside the

lines of police and soldiers and would call, "Copy boy". Reporters would hand them the latest bulletins about the fire, and these would be rushed to the telegraph offices at the Chateau Laurier or the Russell House, to be wired to news editors frantically trying to keep up with the rapidly changing situation.

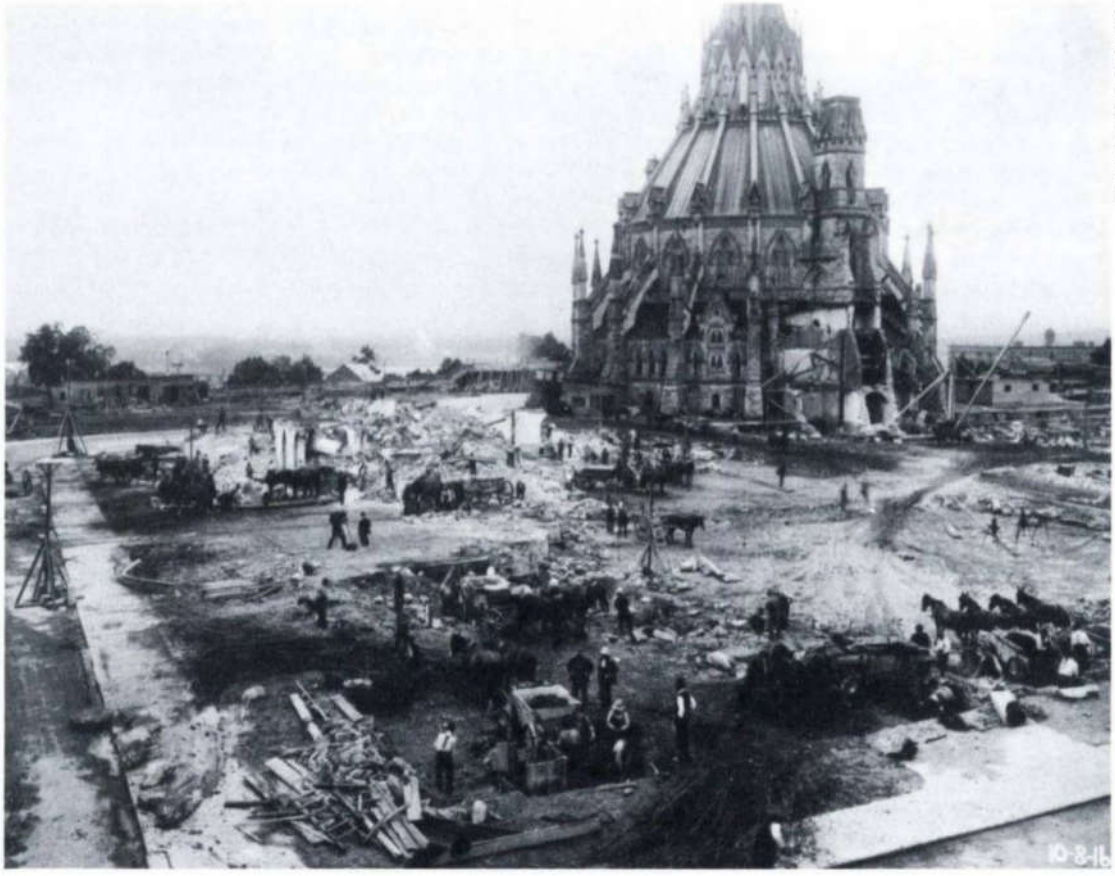
At 9:30 p.m. the roof of the House of Commons collapsed with the sound of a thunderclap, sending millions of sparks shooting upwards into the night sky. The event had been witnessed by Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Governor General, the Duke of Connaught. Both had been attending a concert at the Russell Theatre when the fire broke out. Laurier's thoughts can only be guessed at as he watched the calamity. Nevertheless, the destruction of the legislative chamber in which he had spent forty years of his life must have produced a melancholy effect on the aged politician.

About the time the Commons' roof was collapsing, Martin Griffin, the Parliamentary Librarian, received a telephone call at home informing him of the fire. When he arrived on the hill he attempted to enter the Library but was unable to get by the cordon of police. Anxious to discover its condition, he hurried to the back of the Chateau Laurier for a better view. To his relief, it was intact; the wind was blowing from a favouring direction and had saved it from the flames. Also, Griffin could see firemen pouring water onto the Library in an attempt to keep it and the thousands of volumes of valuable literature it stored safe. In his conversations with those around him, he heard rumours of loss of life and German spy operations. The latter were, in Griffin's opinion, "not at all unlikely but equally likely it was some fellow, perhaps half drunk, who dropped a cigar end."

Inside the Library, staff were frantically raising the lower tier of books in an effort to protect them from water damage. At the same time, soldiers and other staff were removing books and loading them in lorries to be taken to a government warehouse for safekeeping. Earlier, the Library's iron doors had been closed against the advancing smoke and flame. This fortuitous action by M.C. MacCormac of the Library staff was probably the structure's salvation. In addition, his refusal to re-open the doors to some members who were in the Library at the time was responsible for saving their lives.

As the fire consumed the west wing, valuable time was afforded to save some of the contents of the Senate. Under the direction of Lieutenant-Colonel Ernest J. Chambers, Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, some Senate staff and soldiers were recruited to remove the

After the fire and the subsequent removal of debris, the Parliamentary Library stands in solemn isolation.



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Members of the House of Commons meet in Ottawa's Victoria Memorial Museum while awaiting the construction of new quarters. This was the first session after the formation of Borden's Union Government in 1917.

paintings, throne, and chairs occupied at state functions. Fortunately, the Senate was not sitting.

Among those helping was A. Hamlyn Todd, Chief Clerk of the Parliamentary Library. He was particularly anxious that the painting of Queen Victoria by the English artist John Partridge be saved. Once before in 1849, when a mob burned the Parliament building in Montreal, the painting had been rescued from the fire. One of those responsible for its rescue had been Alpheus Todd, A. Hamlyn Todd's uncle. Now, sixty-seven years later, the nephew was attempting to save the painting from another fire. Carrying it to the door, Todd and others discovered that it was too large to pass through. Working quickly, they removed the picture from the frame.

"By this time," Chambers recounted:

> a young Engineer officer and a couple of officers of the 77th had arrived and nobly stood by the little group of senate employees. Again and again the order was passed in by the firemen and others that everyone had to leave the building, but the soldiers remarked, 'These men know the building and if they are ready to take the risk of staying here we will stay by them and see them out.' Thanks to the plucky action of the soldiers, every single picture in the senate precincts, including some of the most valuable and precious portraits in Canada were saved, and in only two cases were they removed from their frames.

When the time finally came to go, Chambers looked down each aisle to insure that no one was left in the room. This done, he sadly closed the door behind him.

By midnight the soldiers had moved the crowds onto Wellington Street. The clang of ambulance bells and repeated calls for doctors gave credence to the rumours that injuries, or worse, had occurred. Unhappily, it was true. Two women guests of the Speaker's wife, Madame Sevigny, had been trapped and suffocated by the smoke. Five others, including the Liberal MP for Yarmouth, B.B. Law, were missing and feared dead.

The excitement of the fire had transformed Ottawa into an "open all night town". Sparks Street was congested with autos, hacks, street cars, and throngs of pedestrians. The quick lunch places and hotel rotundas were filled with people who came in to warm themselves, converse about the night's events, and pass along the latest rumours. At the Chateau Laurier, cabinet ministers and MPs gathered in small groups to talk over their experiences, wonder about what papers they had left behind in their offices, and then stir themselves to go back and watch the fire.

At one o'clock in the morning, the tragedy appeared to be reaching its climax. Victoria Tower, the focal point of the Centre Block, was the last to burn. And while the crowds had gazed somewhat complacently at the burning of the rest of the building, they seemed to take a sympathetic interest in the destruction of the stately tower. During the fire the clock in the steeple had continued to strike the hour until midnight. Indeed, it kept running until 12:30 a.m., providing some forlorn hope that all might not be lost.

As the flames climbed the spire — always slightly ahead of the streams of water from the firemen's hoses — their destructive progress was marked by each tiny window in the tower suddenly bursting into light and billowing clouds of dense, black smoke. The winding staircase which had carried thousands of visitors to the observation deck provided fresh fuel for the blaze and hastened its ascent of the structure. For almost an hour great volumes of smoke issued from the tower like a giant chimney until, finally, the fire broke through the roof. Then, at 1:21 a.m., preceded by warning cries from policemen, firemen and soldiers, the tower tottered on its foundations and fell with a crash, shaking the area for blocks around. The crowds stared on in disbelief. As one reporter commented:

> It was hard to realize as the tower smoked, blazed like a giant torch and finally fell, that the work of years had been undone in less than two hours.

As one who witnessed these events, Duncan Campbell Scott, civil servant and poet, wrote afterwards that the fire "was terrible and tragic; it was the most terrifying and beautiful sight I have ever seen."

By 3:00 a.m. Sir Sam Hughes declared the blaze under control. Firemen continued to play their hoses on the smouldering structure. For yards around, the water had congealed, creating an enormous ice rink

on which soldiers and firemen attempted to move without falling. Earlier, three field kitchens had been sent to Parliament Hill with hot coffee and soup for the soldiers. This was much appreciated as they were thoroughly chilled from standing in the wind and 4° F. weather for several hours. Also, since midnight the troops had been allowed to go in relays to nearby restaurants and hotels to warm themselves and then return to relieve others still at the scene.

Librarian Martin Griffin arose early the next day. He was hopeful that he would be able to get into the Library. When he arrived, he was unprepared for the scene which he found there:

> The sight was terrible. The tower had fallen and the buildings were in ruins. . . . The Library was a melancholy sight. The windows were broken. Streams of water were running down the steps.

The soldiers and police still cordoned off the smoking building and were unwilling to admit anyone. Shortly after 10 o'clock flames broke out in the rear of the east end. As the firemen contended with this new outbreak, one of the stone towers toppled outwards, the blocks of masonry missing the soldiers and firemen by inches. "A narrow squeak," one soldier described it.

The police and soldiers were especially alert because the "German conspiracy" theory had spread and taken hold. Stories were being spread that Rideau Hall and large munitions plants in Ontario were to be the next targets of German saboteurs. In addition, the fire chief had told reporters that he had distinctly heard five explosions, like those caused by shells, while fighting the conflagration. When the prime minister arrived at his East Block office that morning, two young soldiers refused to let him pass. They did not recognize him. It was only when a nearby Dominion policeman assured the soldiers that Borden was who he said he was, would they allow him to enter. The prime minister accepted the inconvenience good naturedly and "complimented the young men on their sense of duty".

Borden was determined to continue the government's business without interruption. While the fire had been raging the night before, he and several cabinet ministers had held an emergency meeting at the Chateau Laurier and decided that the House would meet the next day. Offers were received from Ottawa Collegiate Institute, the Russell House, Chateau Laurier, Dominion Church, and Dominion Theatre inviting the government to use their facilities. The cabinet met at noon and decided to appropriate the Victoria Memorial Museum as the temporary residence of the Senate and House of Commons. At three o'clock that afternoon a somber House convened; the first order of business being to recognize the seven victims who had perished the night before.

A tour of the site revealed how capricious the fire had been in its destruction. Laurier's office, containing all his papers for the years 1912-1915, was completely destroyed. The room next door experienced only a small burn spot on one wall. The recently retired Chief Clerk of Votes and Proceedings of the House of Commons found that everything on either side of his former office

This postcard view from the 1920s shows the new Centre Block. In the foreground is the old East Block, a relic of the original government buildings, which survives to the present time. Compare with the illustration on page 9.

Parliament Buildings, Ottawa, Canada.

had been burned. Yet the only damage done to the office was a small drop of water in the corner of a photograph. The hat and coat which the prime minister had left behind in his escape from the fire were brought to him unharmed, the correspondence he had been working on when the undersecretary rushed in, was not even singed.

Photographs and articles about the burned Parliament Buildings appeared in newspapers across the country and the calamity had an international impact. Telegrams of sympathy poured into the prime minister's office from King George, the Governor General, provincial premiers, the Consul General for Italy, the Royal Swedish Consul General, the Chinese Consul General, and dozens of others. Messages expressing anger and condemnation were received as well:

> . . . . This is not war but arson and murder and one other crime against humanity committed in the name of war. . . . This outrageous deed will recoil in punishment upon the heads of those who perpetrated it. The deed will rightfully be bracketed in history with Belgium and Louvain. . . .

Another wrote the prime minister:

> Allow me to offer you my most sincere congratulations for your escape from the foul deed that was carried out by the destruction of the Canadian Parliament Buildings. How much longer these foul murders and incendiary plots will continue it seems hard to tell, but never will they be stopped until the vile brutes that are back of German militarism are crushed to the earth, and may God grant that time soon come. I trust this dastardly act will be another lesson to the Amercian people of the kind of creatures who pretended to be civilized yet are worse than mediaeval barbarians. . . .

On 6 February, R.A. Pringle, K.C., and Judge D.B. MacTavish were appointed commissioners to inquire into the origin of the fire. During the proceeding three months they heard testimony from witnesses which "varied greatly". Thus, when their final report was delivered on 15 May, the findings were inconclusive. Yet they confirmed in Borden's mind what he believed all along — the fire was the result of "some careless person, throwing a lighted match or cigar-butt into the waste-paper basket."

Because the wall of the Centre Block remained standing, Borden was optimistic that the structure could be rebuilt. He was supported in his opinion by J.A. Pearson and J.O. Marchand, architects chosen to oversee the restoration. After a more detailed inspection, however, it was discovered that the walls were unsafe and that the entire building would have to be razed. The prospect of a completely new structure was welcomed by some. Others, such as Duncan Campbell Scott, were not so sure. "I hear talk of a 'much larger, more imposing, up-to-date building,' " Scott wrote. "The very phrase makes one shudder. We had a building that was beautiful, and harmonized with the site. . . . If they can put up a more beautiful building, let them put it up somewhere else." Nevertheless, on 1 September 1916, the Governor General, the Duke of Connaught, laid the cornerstone of the new building. The first meeting of the House of Commons in the rebuilt Centre Block took place on 2 February 1920 — almost four years to the day after the fire.

The new building resembled the original except that it had an additional storey. The interior was modified to expand the floor space by 50 percent. As a result, increased accommodation was provided for individual members. Improvements of light, ventilation, and acoustics were made in the Commons Chamber. Also, the Hall of Fame leading to the Library was considerably better than the low, narrow corridor it replaced. Gone, however, were Rooms 16 and 6 where, according to Borden:

> . . . . the members of the respective parties were in constant association and thus gained more intimate acquaintance and comradeship.

In short, while the new structure was superior in many respects to the original, it lacked the charm and atmosphere that was an integral part of its predecessor.

When the new Parliament Buildings were opened in 1920, World War I had been over for almost two years. Labour and social unrest were the dominating issues of the time. Laurier had died in 1919 and William Lyon Mackenzie King was leader of the Liberal Party. Borden, exhausted by his wartime labours, would retire in five months and be succeeded by Arthur Meighen. And while the old Centre Block represented Canada's ties with Britain, its successor was to symbolize Canada's emerging nationalism. Finally, the country itself was changing; a rural, agricultural society was evolving into an urban, industrial one. Thus, it was appropriate that the opening of a new House of Commons Building coincided with a new decade full of problems and promise.

Today, the fire and the fine example of Italian Gothic architecture which it destroyed are largely forgotten or unknown. But Fuller and Jones' achievement continues to be commemorated. On the face of every Canadian five and ten dollar bill — appropriately beside the portraits of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Sir John A. Macdonald — can be found a small engraving of the structure that was lost on a cold February night over seventy-five years ago. ♦

Writer Ron Hotchkiss lives in Yarker, Ontario.

WHO FOUGHT ON THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM?

With Wolfe at Quebec

By Ian McCulloch

One of the enduring myths or "sacred cows" of Canadian history is that General James Wolfe's English army beat the French army at Quebec in 1759 on the Plains of Abraham. The battle indeed took place, but the plain truth of the matter is that less than one quarter of Wolfe's soldiers were English, the lion's share being American, followed closely by Scots and Irish. Thus, Americans of today who scorn the abilities of the British "regulars" during the French and Indian War period and praise only the colonial militiamen as the real soldiers of the day, could in fact be condemning their own ancestors.

Likewise, British and Canadian historians of the Imperialist tradition who seized on Wolfe to implant "the glorious deeds of Empire" in the young should be taken with a heaping helping of salt. A.G. Bradley in his book *Wolfe* helped foster myths that Montcalm's army were "driven onwards in headlong rout before the bayonets of the English infantry" on the Plains of Abraham and though "the vain-glorious French Canadian considered himself the equal of half-a-dozen Englishmen", Wolfe came to teach him better at "The Gibraltar of North America".

Who really were the cheering, scarlet-clad soldiers who advanced behind that hedge of cold steel against the Canadians and French? Up to now all histories have focused on the politics, the tactics, and the personalities of the campaign, with little regard for the man "in the trenches". Who was "Thomas Lobster-back", the relatively unknown soldier who descended the St. Lawrence River on 13 September 1759, climbed the cart track at the Anse au Foulon, then won the battle for James Wolfe? A closer look at Wolfe's army (in fact a collection of regiments) reveals some very interesting facts and statistics that have never before figured prominently in any discussion of the Battle of the Plains of Abraham.

Of the ten British regiments at Quebec, one was Scottish, one Irish, four "American" (two in name) and the remainder a polyglot of Irish, English, Welsh and Scottish. In addition to the regiments or battalions were: His Majesty's Rangers, some 600 American backwoodsmen skilled in bush warfare and organized into six companies; 300 provincial pioneers from Massachusetts who arrived in July 1759 to work as engineers in constructing batteries and fortifications; and 330 gunners of the Royal Artillery. Any analyses of Wolfe's army almost invariably end here with concluding statements like "it was an army of skilled professional soldiers" and "its infantry battalions were all serving in North America before the campaign began." The *doyen* of Canadian military historians, C.P. Stacey, says Wolfe "was given a splendid army . . . smaller than he was promised, but the quality was excellent . . . nor did it contain a single militiaman." The implication of this latter remark noting the absence of any provincials in Wolfe's force must be assumed to mean that their presence would have lowered the standards.

The largest and most ferocious of Wolfe's regiments at Quebec was Simon Fraser's Highlanders, the 78th Regiment of Foot. They had been raised specifically for service in North America in 1757 and after action at Louisbourg had been given the nickname "Les Sauvages sans Culottes" by the French. It is clear from a study of the army list and muster rolls that the regiment was a cross section of the clans that had fought for Bonnie Prince Charlie at Culloden in 1745. Simon Fraser, the Master of Lovat and commanding officer, was hoping to regain his confiscated lands forfeited by his father's participation in "The Forty-Five". To do this he was utilizing the only wealth he had left to him — the hereditary attachment of his clan to their chief. He was able to raise his regiment in a few weeks, numbering some 1,300 men, the majority of whom could not speak a single word of English. The officers, and surprisingly, the sergeants, were the cream of Jacobite gentry. In fact, Fraser's Highlanders speaking Gaelic, wearing their native dress and carrying their broadswords were more a Highland clan levy than a British line regiment and probably the merest suggestion that they were "red soldiers" would have been enough to invoke their extreme wrath and violence.

Another unique regiment represented at the battle was the Royal American Regiment or 60th Foot, which supplied two battalions of 600 men each to Wolfe's army. They had only been in existence for a year longer than Fraser's Highlanders, having been raised under somewhat unusual circumstances in 1756. Originally the brainchild of a Swiss soldier of fortune, Colonel

Types of soldier at Quebec included, left to right, officer, Royal Artillery; private, Battalion Company, 42nd (Highland) Regiment of Foot; private, Battalion Company, 78th Foot, (Fraser's Highlanders); soldiers, His Majesty's Independent Companies of American Rangers. These illustrations, and those on page 21, are by G.A. Embleton and are reproduced from "Wolfe's Army" (Men-at-Arms Series #48), copyright Osprey Publishing Ltd., London, and are used with permission.

James Prevost, the new regiment was to be raised using American settlers, principally German and Swiss Protestants, in Pennsylvania. He sold the idea to the Commander-in-Chief of the British army, the Duke of Cumberland, who soon had it approved by Parliament with the requisite funding. The regiment was to have four battalions of 1,000 men each and Prevost was authorized to recruit German and Swiss officers and sergeants in Europe to command the troops. This he did with relative ease, one of them being a certain Swiss lieutenant-colonel in the Dutch king's service, Frederick Haldimand, who some years later became one of Canada's Governors General.

By the summer of 1757, the recruiters of the Royal Americans had run into problems. They could enlist only 1,800 colonials despite the fact that the 50th and 51st Regiments (manned and officered by Americans) had just been disbanded that year and all those units' sergeants, corporals and drummers transferred directly to their establishment, including 61 sick, lame and lazy, as well as 141 deserters. The Royal Americans, therefore, needed most of the Irish replacements sent over in 1757 to swell their vacant ranks to 3,900. The Irish drafts were a collection of misfits the other regiments in Ireland had cast off plus the usual complement of pardoned convicts and pressed men. Therefore a rather ingenious scheme to bring Pennsylvanian Germans thronging to serve the British king with the lure of officers who could speak their own language ended in failure. The 60th Foot (later to become famous as the King's Royal Rifle Corps) thus began its career with an odd assortment: a sprinkling of Germans and Swiss from the Continent; one-fourth colonials; and the remainder "the refuse of the army in Ireland".

Another interesting unit of Wolfe's army were "The Louisbourg Grenadiers", a provisional battalion cobbled together from the three grenadier companies of the regiments left behind to guard Louisbourg. Two of the three regiments that supplied the men were very North American in flavour, having been part of the Nova Scotia garrison for many years. Hopson's or the 40th Foot had been raised in Nova Scotia in 1719 to garrison Annapolis Royal and had spent all 40 years of their existence in the colony. Warburton's, the 45th Foot, had been one of two regiments sent over to Louisbourg in 1746 after its capture by the New Englanders in a previous war. Though not so long in the tooth as Hopson's, they had spent 13 years of garrison life in America. Both, needless to say, recruited

1 **Private, Battalion Company, 48th Foot, 1755**
2 **Ensign with Regimental Colour, 44th Foot, 1755**
3 **Captain of over three years' seniority, Royal Navy**

G. A. EMBLETON

Simon Fraser, Master of Lovat, from a sketch in the British Museum taken from a wax model.

in the American colonies to remain up to strength. When the fresh 43rd Regiment arrived from Ireland to relieve the Annapolis Royal garrison in 1757, Captain Knox made the following observations on the detachment of the 40th:

> They made a very shabby appearance and did not trouble themselves much about discipline, nor were they regularily cloathed; their officers seemed to be a good deal ashamed; but I think great allowances should be made for troops, situated as they were, who were worn out with hard labour and watching, and who rather looked upon themselves in the light of slaves or, at best, of rangers doomed to perpetual banishment. The regiments in Nova Scotia have suffered much in all respects by their long confinement in this province, and their being much sub-divided into small detachments to garrison so many places.

James Wolfe was less charitable:

> The Regt. of Hopson and Warburton have been so long in this Country, & hence imbibed so many bad habits, that No good can be made of them. They should be removed before any reformation can be made. If Troops remain long in one place, they always Corrupt, & sink into Laziness, & Domestick Habits.

James Wolfe did make good use of them in the end, but only after some short, sharp training and then, took only their grenadier companies with him to Quebec. A fellow "Nova Scotia" garrison regiment was Lascelles' or the 47th Foot commanded by Robert Monckton, later Wolfe's second-in-command at Quebec. This regiment had arrived in 1750 with Governor Edward Cornwallis to help establish Halifax and provide its garrison. It consisted of 290 rank and file, as well as 180 women and children. The 48th Foot followed on its heels in 1755 to take part in Braddock's ill-fated expedition against Fort Duquesne (now Pittsburgh). Both regiments were authorized at that time to increase their manning from 310 to 730 men each by recruiting locally. Yale professor Stanley Pargellis noted in his book *Lord Loudon in North America* that three-fourths of the men in these regiments by 1756 "were neither Irish nor English, but men enlisted in the colonies". The same was true, he claimed, to a lesser extent, of the 40th, 45th and the 60th. At the outbreak of the Seven Years' War Pargellis claims: "If 8,000 colonials wore the provincial blue, nearly an equal number glittered in the redcoat and pipeclay of His Majesty's regular army."

Another body of men that formed a significant part of Wolfe's army were the 600 men of His Majesty's Independent Companies of Rangers raised in 1756. The New Hampshire captain, Robert Rogers, was to enlist "only courageous men experienced in hunting, tracking and long marches" to serve as the eyes and ears of the army. Rogers recruited principally in New England, for it was on its forested frontiers that he could find the experienced men who measured up to the requirements in his warrant. Wolfe's first impressions of Rogers' Rangers at Louisbourg were not favourable and he deemed them "the worst soldiers in the universe". By the end of the siege of Quebec, however, he was relying on them more and more to counter "the paint and howl" of the Indian menace as well as doing the dirty work of scorching and scourging the local countryside. In July 1759, 300 colonial pioneers arrived from Boston to assist Wolfe's small army and some of them were immediately used to bolster the dwindling ranks of the Rangers who were being depleted on a daily basis by the nasty and little-publicized *guerilla* war that paralleled Wolfe's siege operations. A Massachusetts pioneer inducted into the Rangers on his arrival, Jeremiah Pearsons of Newbury Falls, gives us a stark glimpse of the campaign through American eyes:

> . . . the Raingers and the lite Invitery embarked aboard the flatbotum Boats and went down the river about 30 miles and Lay in the Brig that night — Ye 23rd [August] we went on shore for to set the homes on fire we had an ingagement with the french and kild and sculped 16 of them and came all the

way up by Land and got Sheep and geese and hens anuf of them and Set all the houses on fire as we came . . .

Otways, or the 35th Foot, was an Irish regiment nicknamed the "Belfast Lilies" or the "Orange Lilies" on account of the orange facings on their uniforms. Sent out from Ireland with Lord Loudon and the 22nd Regiment in 1756, they suffered the following year at Fort William Henry when Indians went on the rampage after the Irishmen had surrendered to Montcalm's troops. The following year at the surrender of Louisbourg, the 35th's ranks were swelled by 51 Irishmen who had been serving with the Voluntaires Etrangers Regiment of the French Army and wished to transfer their allegiance. The Royal Americans also benefited from this turn of events, taking in nearly 200 German and Swiss mercenaries of the same regiment as "British" recruits.

The remaining four regiments of Wolfe's army are harder to analyse. The 28th (Bragg's) and the 43rd (Kennedy's) came to North America as two of the nine regiments sent out by William Pitt for the first attempt on Louisbourg in 1757. Both spent the winter relieving Hopson's and Warburton's detachments at their dreary frontier outposts. Their soldiers would have probably been mostly Irish, having come directly from

Brigadier-General, The Hon. Robert Monckton.

The Battle of the Plains of Abraham, 13 September, 1759.

National Archives of Canada

garrison duties in Ireland. The last two regiments at Quebec, the 15th (Amherst's) and the 58th (Anstruther's) were the least experienced in terms of North American service, having arrived in the spring of 1758 for the second (successful) attempt on Louisbourg. The 15th was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel the Honourable James Murray (the first Governor of Canada) and the 58th by the youngest of the famous Howe brothers, William, later Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces during the American War of Independence. (His brother Richard was a fighting admiral in the Royal Navy).

In total, Wolfe's army, plus its auxiliaries (artillery, rangers, and pioneers), numbered some 8,900 men when they left Louisbourg for Quebec. The day of the battle, however, only half of this complement stood on the damp meadow grass of the Plains of Abraham waiting to fight Montcalm's army. There were several reasons for this — all of them Wolfe's own doing.

First, he had sent a force of 1,600 men downriver to scourge the countryside under the command of Major George Scott (40th Foot) two weeks before. This sizeable force — comprising all the rangers, as well as detachments of the light infantry, Fraser's Highlanders and the 43rd — was not present for the battle where it might have been used to good effect in pursuing the defeated French army and completing its destruction.

Secondly, over 900 men had been lost through death, desertion and disease during the three months of siege prior to the final battle. Over 500 men alone were killed and wounded at the Battle of Montmorency in July, an attempt by Wolfe to bring the French army

Wolfe directs his forces during the siege of Quebec, from a watercolour sketch by his aide-de-camp, Captain Hervey Smith.

WOLFE'S ARMY AT QUEBEC

SERIAL	DATE RAISED/ ARRIVED IN NOR. AMER	REGIMENT		NO. EMBARKED AT L'BOURG JUNE 1759	ETHNIC BREAKDOWN BY %	TOTAL NO. WHO FOUGHT AT BATTLE 13 SEPTEMBER	TOTAL NON-ENGLISH SOLDIERS AT BATTLE	TOTAL NON-ENGLISH SOLDIERS IN ARMY
1	1719	Hopson's	(40th)	110	100% American	80	80	110
2	1746	Warburton's	(45th)	108	100% American	80	80	108
3	1750	Lascelles'	(47th)	679	75% American	360	270	510
4	1755	Webb's	(48th)	852	75% American	683	512	640
5	1756	2nd Bn, R.A.R.	(60th)	581	25% Amer/25% Ger/50% Irish	322	322	581
6	1756	3rd Bn, R.A.R.	(60th)	607	25% Amer/25% Ger/50% Irish	540	540	607
7	1756	Otway's	(35th)	899	50% Irish/50% Amer	519	519	899
8	1756	Whitmore's	(22nd)	108	50% Irish/50% English	80	40	54
9	1756	Rangers		576	100% American	—	—	576
10	1757	Kennedy's	(43rd)	715	50% Irish/50% English	327	163	357
11	1757	Bragg's	(28th)	591	50% Irish/50% English	421	210	304
12	1757	Fraser's	(78th)	1,269	100% Scottish	672	672	1,269
13	1758	Anstruther's	(58th)	616	30% Irish/70% English	335	100	185
14	1758	Amherst's	(15th)	594	30% Irish/70% English	406	122	178
15	1758	Royal Artillery		330	30% English/70% Mixed	46	31	220
16	—	Staff Officers		13	Mixed	13	4	4
17	1759	Colonial Pioneers		300	100% American	—	—	300
TOTALS				8,948		4,884	3,663 (75%)	6,902 (77%)

to battle on the Beauport Flats. The thirteen grenadier companies of the army and the Royal Americans had born the brunt of casualties at this minor battle which can only be described as a grave miscalculation of the enemy's resolve and strength on the part of General Wolfe.

Thirdly, Wolfe had to leave 1,350 men at his camps on the Isle of Orleans, at Point Levy and the Point des Peres to guard his batteries, hospitals, storage depots and army baggage.

The returns for the battle thus show 4,884 men present, of which 13 were staff officers, 241 commissioned officers, 361 NCOs (sergeants and corporals), 46 artillerymen, and 4,223 private soldiers. Exactly how many of Wolfe's army were "English" could be estimated to have been no more than 25 percent. Even this amount seems fairly generous given the geneaologies of all the regiments already outlined in this article.

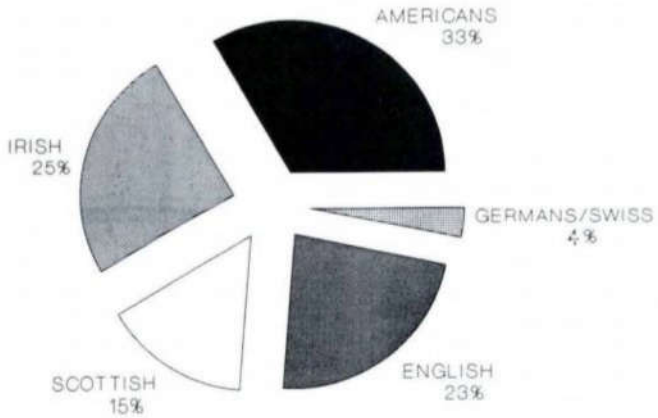
Therefore, "Thomas Lobsterback" was very much in the minority at Quebec, his provincial cousins very much to the fore — "Jonathan, Angus, and Patrick Lobsterback", if you will. It is also interesting to note that most of the American, Scottish and Irish soldiers who served Wolfe so diligently at Quebec then retired in North America after the war, almost invariably reappearing as high-ranking officers and generals in George Washington's Continental Army some years later. But that is another story. ◆

Major Ian M. McCulloch is currently serving with the Royal Canadian Regiment at St-Hubert, Quebec.

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

Detail from Edward Penny's "The Death of Wolfe".

WOLFE'S ARMY AT QUEBEC, 1759



MEN-AT-ARMS

The usual British regiment in the eighteenth century contained ten companies of 100 men; a few, ten companies of 70 each. A regiment could have from one to four battalions of 1,000 men each, hence the words battalion and regiment are sometimes used interchangeably in the history books. The battalions were usually commanded by a lieutenant-colonel. A regiment would have only one colonel-in-chief with the rank of full colonel and it was the custom to call a regiment by its current colonel's name despite the fact that the army had recently instituted the number system.

Emily Stowe: Feminist and Healer

By Sydell Waxman

No woman had ever entered a Canadian university when Emily Howard Stowe decided to become this nation's first woman doctor. When Emily approached the University of Toronto the president was not impressed. His answer was firm and unequivocal; "The doors of the University are not open to women and I trust they never will be."

To this Emily replied: "Then I will make it the business of my life to see that they will be opened, that women may have the same opportunities as men."

Who was this extraordinary woman? How was she able to fight society, religion, prejudice and pave the way for women's education and suffrage in Canada?

Born in 1831 to Quaker parents, Emily and her five sisters were infused by their mother, Hannah Jennings, with a strong sense of equality and high academic aspirations. Women were equal in Quaker homes as well as in the affairs of the church. Theirs was one of the few religions that welcomed female ministers. Although Emily received support and education at home, the broader social climate in the mid-1800s was not receptive to a woman with vision.

It was a time when girls were trained to become wives and mothers and the education of the more fortunate females included such basics as needlepoint, cooking and the social graces. Prejudice rallied against the idea of a woman studying medicine. It was widely believed that medicine was an improper profession for women and that women were mentally and emotionally unsuited to medical work.

Anaesthesia and antiseptic procedures, the major medical discoveries of the last century, had not yet brought the medical profession into a respectable light. Even nursing was not considered suitable for women. Differences in the medical field often were handled crudely — there is a recorded instance of two obstetricians fighting a duel because they disagreed over a case.

The medical field itself was unorganized and doctors were poorly educated. Surgeons operated in their street clothes. Medical students often resorted to grave-robbing and "operation assistants" were four strong men who held the patient down.

The idea of a woman entering this medical climate was deemed to be inconceivable and scandalous. There had actually been a woman doctor in Canada before Emily. Dr. "James" Stuart Barry had passed as a man during a 46-year medical career. From 1857-1861 Dr. Barry was Inspector-General of Military Hospitals in Upper and Lower Canada, but her true sex was discovered only after her death.

There were many who found the idea of a woman doctor laughable. In fact, Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman doctor in the United States, was admitted in 1849 to the Medical College in New York State by a student vote that thought the whole idea was indeed a joke. Eventually Blackwell made her way to study in Paris, the world centre for medical research in the mid-1800s.

Emily Stowe's exceptional intelligence would prove to be a necessary asset and was evident even in her early academic work. At the age of 16 she became a public school teacher. In 1847 teaching at such a young age was not uncommon.

The Common School Acts of 1846, 1847 and 1850 stated that everyone had a right to free education, but it was not until 1871 that schooling became compulsory for four months of every year for children seven to twelve. For her work Emily received half the salary of a male teacher.

She managed to save enough money to enter Normal School where she received her First Class Teachers' Certificate in 1854. Then a remarkable thing happened. Her standing at school was so exceptional that she was appointed principal of the public school in Brantford. At the age of 23 Emily Stowe became the first woman principal in Canada.

Her ties with religion remained strong and through her church membership she met and married in 1856 John Stowe, a carriage-maker and lay preacher, later described as "a liberal-minded man whose brilliant wife could always count upon him for sympathy and assistance." When John became ill with tuberculosis, Emily was forced to return to teaching, taking a post with Nelles Academy at Mount Pleasant. The academy was an unusual octagon-shaped building and it is supposed that John Stowe built it, since the Stowe home was also this same odd shape, consisting of a wagon and blacksmith shop on the ground floor and living quarters upstairs.

It was during this period of marriage, having children and teaching, that Emily's long fight to become a doctor began. Struggling to support her three children, Augusta, Frank and John, Emily was in need of money, yet she was determined to enter medicine and hoped that women patients would one day be treated by women doctors. It was an age of extreme modesty and female patients remained dressed for examinations. Many women would bear pain and infections for years rather than be examined by a male doctor.

This very modesty was used as an argument against women entering the medical field. An editorial in a Kingston newspaper read:

> We should be sorry indeed to know that Canadian maidens or matrons either, were so dead to that modesty which is woman's chief charm as to sit

This celebrated operating room scene, photographed by the Boston firm of Southworth and Hawes in 1852, shows the casual approach to surgery in the mid-nineteenth century. The doctors are in street clothes and the patient is still wearing his socks. No women are in evidence.

Metro Toronto Library

Toronto School of Medicine, interior of dissecting room, circa 1856. Below: John McCaul, President of the University of Toronto, 1850-1880: "The doors of the University are not open to women. . ."

unmoved side by side with young men and listen to lectures . . . feminine mysteries freely discussed before a mixed class of young men and young women is not only shocking, but it is disgusting and degrading.

It was suggested to Emily that she follow Dr. Barry's example and pose as a man, but she finally turned to the United States where Dr. Clemence Sophia Lozier had opened the Women's New York Medical School in 1863. Emily studied while her sister Cornelia stayed with her three children. She returned to Canada in 1868 with a medical degree. Anticipating a busy career, she moved her family to Toronto — only to be thwarted by a new law. She still could not legally practise medicine in Canada.

The Canadian College of Physicians and Surgeons required that doctors attend one session of lectures at a Canadian university and take the matriculation exam of the College of Physicians and Surgeons before receiving a license. The problem, of course, was that Emily was not allowed into the university.

Financial pressures forced Dr. Stowe to set up practice, illegally, in her Toronto home. She was not the only doctor practising against the law. As late as 1871, the Ontario Medical Register shows that of 1,777 registered doctors, 500 or so practised in defiance of the law. Not until 1880, at age 49, was Emily able to obtain a license to practise legally.

In the meantime, Emily's practice grew steadily as she discovered that women were pleased to have a

female doctor. Her husband John recovered from his illness and entered dental school. Later they shared a joint practice in a house at 111 Church Street.

Emily Stowe acted as president of the Toronto Literary and Science Club that she helped to found in 1877. The group met to discuss women in the professions, women's education and the condition of women in the work force. Eventually the group succeeded in securing separate sanitary facilities in factories and acquired chairs for clerks who worked long hours. They realized that further advancement required enfranchisement.

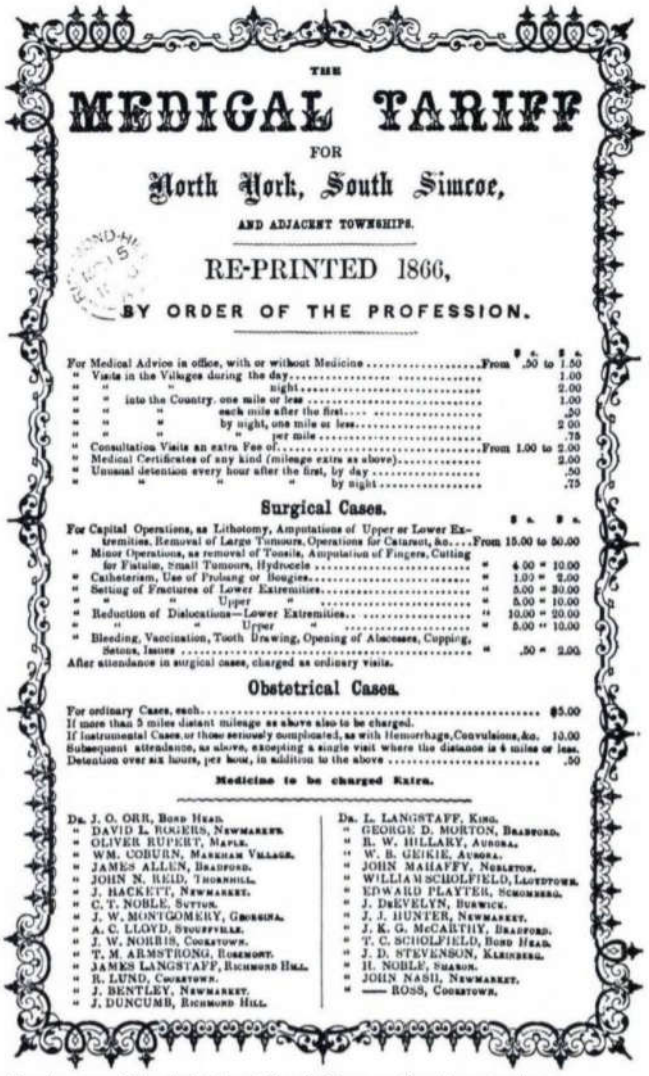
The club renamed itself in 1883 and became the Toronto Suffrage Association. Emily continued to lecture on female education, equal pay and nutrition but the ultimate goal became the vote for women. This movement quickly spread, and with Emily's help established itself in 1893 as the Dominion Woman's Enfranchisement Association.

She became a popular and eloquent speaker in Ontario towns, dealing with such topics as women's legal status, crime and alcoholism, claiming on one occasion, that "The day will dawn when woman will equal man not only in the medical profession but in every other position in which she is qualified to excel." Very few escaped her acid pen as she continued to write on all women's issues in the daily press. In her speeches and writing she referred to men as "male-men" and God as "the Father-Mother of Nature". She called herself "a mental scientist" and "a scientific socialist."

One of her dreams came true when her daughter, Augusta, graduated in 1887 from the Toronto School of Medicine — the first woman to study and graduate in Canada. Augusta's experience at an integrated school had been no easier than her mother's. Both women helped form the Ontario Medical College for Women in 1883, a forerunner of Toronto's Women's College Hospital.

Emily had just recovered from the death of her husband in 1891 when she had to retire from medical practice following an accident at the Chicago World's Fair that left her lame. Although she retreated to Muskoka in 1893, she continued to lead the active women's group. A letter by the President of the Women's Canadian Historical Society stated that "it was from the doctor's [Emily's] liberal views that all the progress made by women in this province particularly and the others incidentally sprang." Emily did not live to see the day in 1916 when women in Canada first received the vote, but her name is honoured as one of the great suffragists. A bronze bust of Emily Stowe can be found in Toronto's city hall.

Emily's uphill fight against the conventions of her time did not leave her bitter. In her own words her career was "one of much struggle characterized by the usual persecution which attends everyone who pioneers



THE

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" Medical Certificates of any kind (mileage extra as above)			2.00
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" JOHN N. REID, Thornhill.	" WILLIAM SCHOLFIELD, Lloydtown.
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" R. LUND, Cookstown.	" JOHN NASH, Newmarket.
" J. BENTLEY, Newmarket.	" —— ROSS, Cookstown.
" J. DUNCUMB, Richmond Hill.	

The doctors of North York and South Simcoe offered a price list to those seeking medical treatment in Victorian Canada.

a movement or steps out of line with established custom." When she died in 1903 the *Toronto Globe* stated that Emily Stowe "recognized prejudice and reactionary views as natural weaknesses, obstacles to be expected and to be removed from the path of progress."

* * *

POSTSCRIPT: MODES OF MEDICINE

Dr. E.D. Worthington in his book *Reminiscences of Student Life and Practice,* describes the doctor's main tools and remedies around 1840-1850:

> A medical man would as soon have dreamed of going to church without his prayer book . . . as of going out on his daily round of duty without his lancet case in his pocket. . . . It was considered the

Dissecting department, Toronto School of Medicine, circa 1856.

> correct thing to be bled at least every spring. . . Some people indulged their fancy twice a year with extras whenever they had a "swimming in the head" or a reminder of hereditary tendency to apoplexy. . . In our official sanctum it was a concession that bleeding and tooth-drawing were perquisites. . . . I need hardly add that no one ever left surgery, no matter what his ailment, without being bled or having a tooth extracted. . . those two simple remedies were the ones we relied upon.

By the time Emily Stowe opened her practice more "modern" methods were employed. There was a great belief in the healing power of electricity, electrotherapeutics and galvanic baths (hydro-therapy). Most deaths from 1840-1880 were from typhus, cholera and smallpox. Ague or malaria was a serious problem in Canada and was prevalent until the late 1870s.

Ether, first used in 1846, helped to make the patient more comfortable, but, unfortunately, it did not affect the death rate. It remained for antiseptic procedures and general cleanliness to change the medical statistics drastically. Surgical pictures of 1870 show doctors in their street clothes, with no nurses in attendance. By 1890 surgical gowns were in use and nurses were present but no masks or gloves had yet been designed. Rubber gloves were originally used to protect the hands of nurses.

Antiseptic methods were brought to Canada at an early stage by Canadians who had studied under Lister. The first Canadian doctors to use antiseptic methods were Dr. A.E. Mallock of Hamilton, Ontario, and Dr. T.G. Roddick of Montreal. Medical circles at first jeered at the "carbolic spray" as, initially, this antiseptic was used too vigorously and it wet everything. (One account speaks of the operator and his assistants wading about in long rubber boots while visitors stood on chairs to watch the operation.)

Abraham Groves was an important surgeon around Emily's time and he has recorded some of his early experiences:

> When I began my practice in Fergus, Ontario in 1871 there was no hospital nearer than Toronto, there was not a trained nurse in Canada, and there were no skilled assistants. Little or nothing was known about germs. There were no rubber gloves, sterilized gauze or absorbent cotton and silk was the usual material used for sutures and ligatures.
>
> My early operative work was done under very primitive conditions. The operating room was usually the kitchen, there being no other room large enough in the house of those days, and either a couple of boards laid on trestles or the kitchen table was used as an operating table. Milk pans were used as basins, sea sponges for wiping and horsehair, taken directly from the horse's tail — generally from the doctor's horse — was used for sutures. If the operation had to be done at night a coal-oil lamp supplied the light. Chloroform was the one anaesthetic. It was dropped from a bottle with a split cork, the inhaler being a towel.

Grove also tells of successfully transfusing a female patient, using her husband's blood which he withdrew in a rubber piston syringe, kept warm in a basin standing in hot water and injected directly into the arm. It was probably the first recorded transfusion in Canada, just as his was the first appendectomy in 1883.

When Emily Stowe started her practice, ether was widely used, but Pasteur and Lister had not yet convinced the world of the importance of germs and antiseptic methods. Her career paralleled one of the most active and inventive times in medicine. ♦

Sydell Waxman is a freelance writer who lives in Thornhill, Ontario.

Sportsmen at War

Conn Smythe and Co. Man the Bofors — And Play a Little Baseball

By Brian Kendall

As do all of their annual reunions, the memorial banquet to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Conn Smythe's World War II unit, the 30th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, began last November with the lights down, the only illumination a spotlight on a large framed photograph of a uniformed Major Smythe. Everyone present bowed his head as a roll call was read of the battery's dead, both those killed in action and the comrades who have died since the end of the war. The reading of the 164 names lasted several minutes, and when the lights went up there were few dry eyes in the Ontario Room of Toronto's Royal York Hotel.

Until his death in 1980, Conn Smythe was a fixture at these dinners, held every year without interruption since 1946 after the 30th's return from overseas. These were his boys. Many of the 300 men who volunteered for what quickly became known as "The Sportsmen's Battery" were personally recruited by Smythe, then famous throughout the country as the combative managing director of the Toronto Maple Leafs hockey club. Most of the recruits were gifted athletes, among their number football, golf, softball, lacrosse and hockey stars.

Though a tough disciplinarian known as "the little pistol" for his fiery temper, Smythe and his men developed an enduring affection. "We knew he loved us, and would do everything in his power to ensure our welfare," says one battery member. Even after Smythe was badly injured during a bombing attack on Caen in July 1944 and leadership of the battery was assumed by Major Zouch Palmer, he kept up a stream of morale-boosting letters to his troops while convalescing back in Canada. He also took the time to meet with and reassure their families. After the war, several of the men were given jobs at Maple Leaf Gardens and with Smythe's other business interests.

The guest speaker for the fiftieth-anniversary dinner was hockey coach and broadcaster Don Cherry, but when he was alive, Smythe was always the featured attraction. He would reminisce about old misadventures among battery members, and about the unit's sporting prowess against all comers on the ice rinks and improvised playing fields of England and continental Europe. "The Major", the "Maje" or the "Old Man", as he was variously called by his men, would conclude by saying how proud he was to have been able to fulfill his dream of leading them into battle.

Although he was forty-five and a decorated veteran of World War I when war started in 1939, Smythe immediately began looking for a way to get in on the action. He took officer retraining courses, then was given command of a non-permanent training corps based at the University of Toronto, with the rank of captain. But he was constantly frustrated in his attempts to go on active service and was getting the distinct impression the army felt he was too old.

Then he hit on the idea of forming a battery of sportsmen, much like the artillery unit he had served with in the 1914-1918 war, which had managed to recruit some of southern Ontario's best young athletes, including Smythe, a star amateur hockey player.

"I thought if I could go out and form my own Battery, hustle for recruits, and get it organized, they'd have to let me take it overseas," Smythe recalled in his autobiography *Conn Smythe: If You Can't Beat 'Em in the Alley*.

On 5 September 1941, the 30th Battery was formed as part of the 7th Toronto Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery. (The 30th would soon become part of the 6th Canadian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment.) Smythe was named the 30th's commanding officer, with the acting rank of major.

Attracted by Smythe's fame, talented athletes already in the army began requesting transfers to the new unit, and sportsmen not already in uniform began joining up. Two of the country's top golfers, Clare Chinery and Jim Boeckh, joined the 30th, as well as Toronto Argonaut footballer Don (Shanty) McKenzie. Local softball stars Geordie Gill and Nossy Atanasoff enlisted. So did every member of the Mimico Mountaineers, who had just won the Mann Cup, the Canadian lacrosse championship.

Two well-known Toronto sports columnists also signed on, Ted Reeve of the *Telegram* and Ralph Allen of the *Globe and Mail*. Reeve, especially, helped to

Conn Smythe: "The Maje".

spread the fame of the unit by sending home columns in which he recounted the battery's progress from basic training to the battlefields of Europe. Allen stayed with the 30th for two years until the *Globe* requested his release. He went on to become one of Canada's most celebrated war correspondents.

But not everyone who joined the battery was a familiar name. Bernard Dunn, now 67, remembers how as an awe-struck 17-year-old he stood in front of Smythe at a downtown Toronto recruiting office in late 1941, trying to convince the Major that despite his baby face he was in fact 18, the minimum age required by the army. "Smythe just laughed and said, 'If that kid's eighteen, so am I.' " But regulations were overlooked and Dunn was welcomed in as the 30th's youngest member. Major Smythe had a battery to get up to strength, and he wasn't about to turn away anyone so anxious to fight.

The 30th's first stop was Brantford for basic training. Then it was on to Camp Petawawa in central Ontario for instruction on the 40mm Bofors, a formidable weapon against low-flying fighters that, as much as anything, eventually persuaded the Germans to abandon the dive-bomber technique. At full strength while in action in France in 1944, the battery manned 18 Bofors guns.

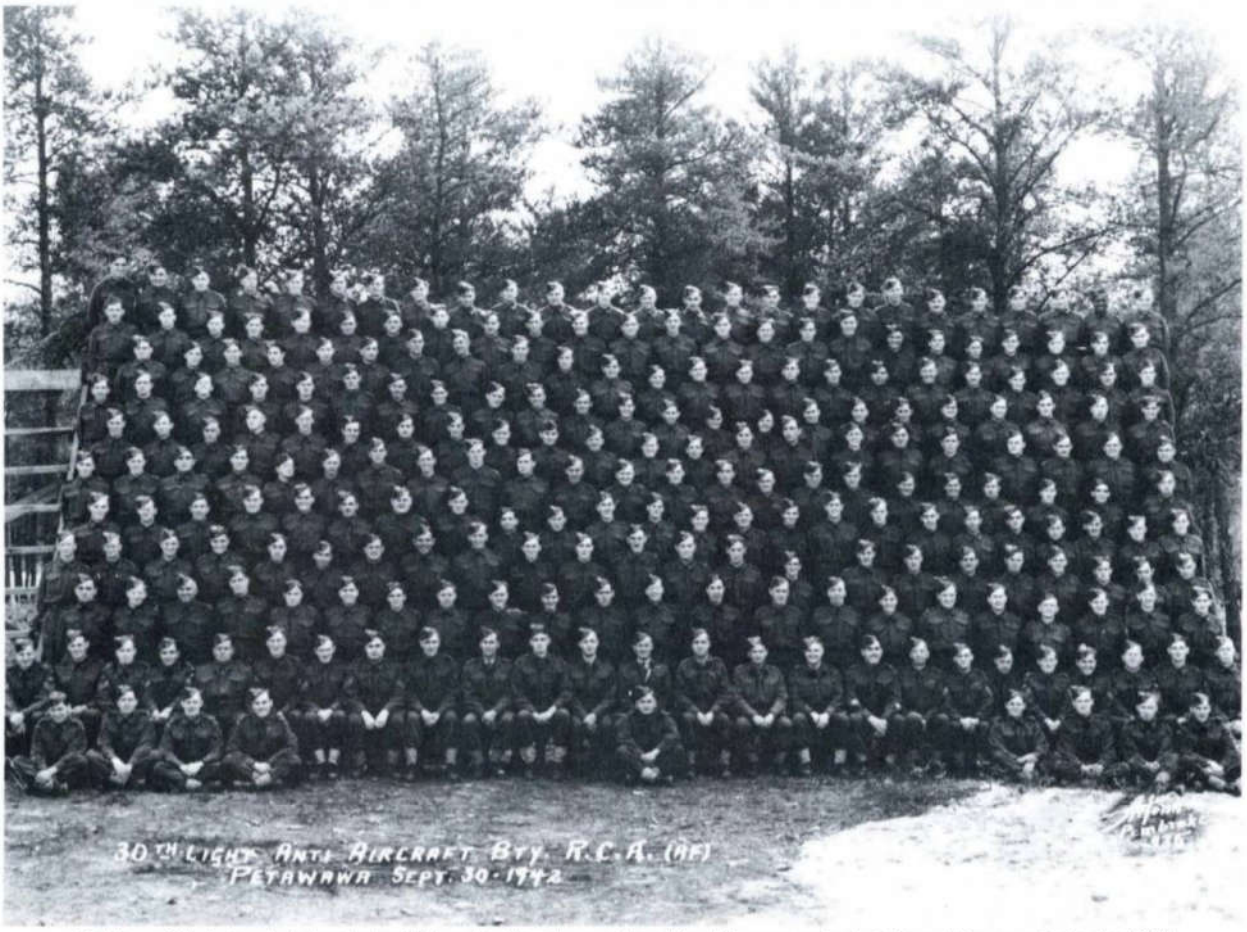
Major Smythe quickly earned a reputation as a fair but strict commander who always demanded the best from his men. "There was never any fooling with the Major," says the 30th's sergeant-major Nick Hatten, 71. "He was the boss, and make no mistake about it."

In the early spring of 1942 the Major's other troops, the Toronto Maple Leafs, were in the process of making the most famous comeback in hockey history by overcoming a 3-0 deficit in games against the Detroit Red Wings in the Stanley Cup final. Smythe managed to get leave to travel to Toronto for the final game when, his team down 1-0 after two periods, he gave the Leafs one of his famous pep talks during the second intermission and they roared back to win 3-1. Ted Reeve later wrote that Smythe returned to Camp Petawawa in such a good mood that ". . . . we got away with only two hours gun drill and the route march was cut down to ten miles."

There was obvious affection between Smythe and Reeve, whom the Major respected as both a writer and outstanding athlete. Reeve originally gained fame as a football and lacrosse player, and had gone on to coach Queen's University to two national championships before turning to sports reporting.

Most of all, Smythe admired Reeve's determination to join the army despite the fact he was 39 years old

Smythe and sportswriter and old artillery man Ted Reeve enjoy a joke at a battery reunion.



Soldiers of the battery left the playing field and took to the grandstand for this group portrait at Camp Petawawa, September 1942.

when the battery was formed in 1941, and had flat feet as well as old sports-related injuries that included arthritis in several joints, dislocated shoulders and bad knees. "He had missed the First War and wanted to be part of this one," wrote Smythe, who worked hard to keep Reeve in the battery by helping him evade army medicals he had no chance of passing. "I thought he was the bravest man in our Battery, just to be there."

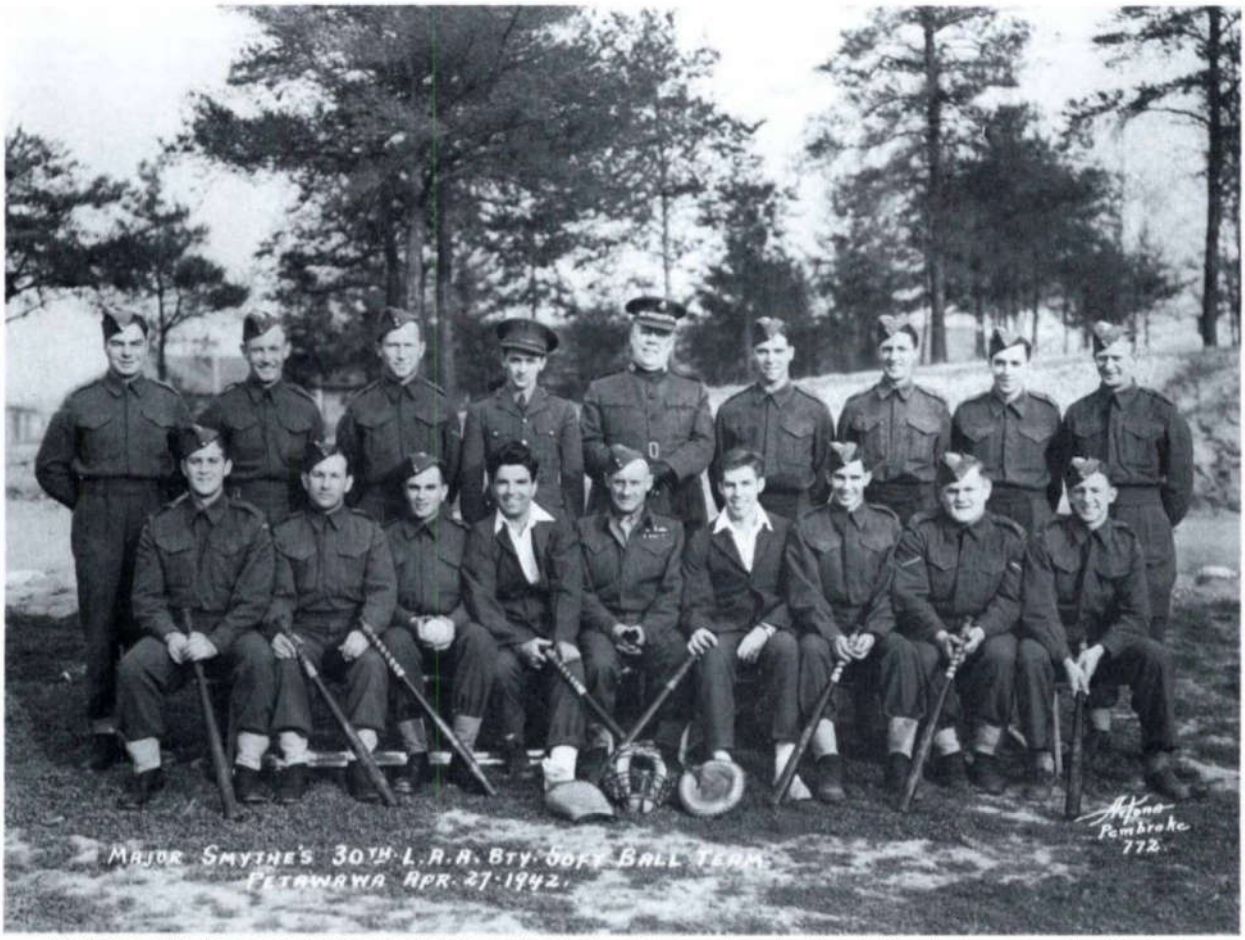
Smythe saw nothing wrong with bending army regulations a little when it suited his purpose and benefited his men. In June of 1942 when the battery was ordered across the country to defend the west coast of Vancouver Island after a Japanese sub launched several shells ashore, he used his old hockey connections with the CPR to have his men issued first-class train accommodation to the coast "by mistake", every man with his own berth and meals in the dining car. The army made a fuss when it found out, but Smythe's men loved him for it.

After an uneventful summer largely spent swimming and beachcombing, the battery returned east (in a regular troop train this time) tanned and fit. Then Smythe and his men received the orders they had been waiting for: proceed to Halifax for departure to England. On 27 October 1942, the battery set sail onboard the *Queen Elizabeth*.

In England, the battery was soon posted to anti-aircraft duty in three locations along the south coast. Smythe's headquarters were at Eastbourne.

"Although we shot at the occasional German plane, we didn't see a lot of action while we were in England," says Nick Hatten. "There's an expression that was popular during the war: 'Hurry up and wait.' That about sums it up. Most of our time was spent on training duties designed to get us ready for the invasion of France."

That and earning a large and not unexpected reputation as the greatest single group of athletes in the Canadian Army. The battery had already contributed several key players to the regimental squad that won the Camp Petawawa hockey championship. In England the 30th produced winning hockey and soccer teams as well as a softball squad that won the Canadian Army Championship in 1943. Another army championship would be won in Holland in 1944 by the basketball squad.



The battery softball team was "all but unbeatable", winning the Canadian Army championship in 1943 and going on tour after V.E.-Day to entertain troops waiting to go home.

But more than anything it was the all-but-unbeatable softball team that established the battery's athletic fame throughout the Canadian Army, compiling a record of 110 wins against four defeats. After V.E.-Day the team was kept together for two months to entertain the troops in a series of exhibition games. "We played everywhere," remembers Geordie Gill, 72, a star pitcher on the team. "We even played in a P.O.W. camp with a group of German soldiers watching. I don't think they quite knew what to make of it all."

The 30th spent more than twenty months in England. As the invasion of France drew closer, the men became increasingly eager for action. They were all volunteers who had signed up to fight for their country, and they were sick of the waiting.

Even after the Normandy invasion on 6 June 1944, the battery waited several more weeks until orders finally came to embark for France in early July. Then the 30th was almost forced to go into battle without its commanding officer, when Smythe broke four ribs playing in a softball game organized to keep the men occupied in the last days before boarding ship.

Knocked unconscious at third base where he had been bowled over by a base runner, Smythe's first orders when he came to were for his men to find him a civilian doctor and not to tell anyone outside the battery about his injury. He knew army brass would never let him make the trip to France if they found out.

But inevitably word did leak and Smythe was visited by a colonel who told him he had no choice but to report the injury. "My holster was right beside my bed," Smythe wrote. "I reached over and put my hand on the revolver and said, 'Now listen, I've been through a tough two-and-a-half years to get here. If I'm not going, you're not going.' "

More likely impressed by Smythe's determination rather than fearful for his own safety, the colonel eventually agreed that Smythe belonged with his men. On 9 July, strapped into the seat of a gun wagon because he was in too much pain to climb down ladders into landing craft, Smythe rode onto the beach at Normandy.

The battery's destination was Caen, where the Germans had put up a stubborn resistance since D-

Day. Just two days before the 30th arrived in France Caen was virtually destroyed when 467 Allied bombers dumped 2,561 tons of explosives on the city. The 30th's guns were to defend two bridges across the River Orne into the city's southern suburbs, still largely held by the Germans.

As they entered Caen the men had their first look at the destruction wrought by total war. "The city was an absolute shambles," recalls Bernard Dunn. "There was nothing but rubble as far as the eye could see. I think it made us all wonder what we'd gotten ourselves into."

Almost immediately the men also saw their first heavy action of the war. The Germans were making a big effort to hold the line against the British and Canadians at Caen. During the day Messerschmitts and Focke-Wulfs might appear at any moment and almost nightly enemy bombers attacked Allied positions. During the first few days in Caen the 30th counted eight men wounded.

Finally, after a massive Allied bombing attack on German positions on 18 July, the British and Canadians began to make slow progress south of the Orne as the long-awaited breakout from Normandy began to take shape. The 30th remained behind to man its positions at the two bridges against continuing German air attacks.

One day while in Caen the battery received a visit from Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery and Winston Churchill. Major Smythe was able to forgive the resulting breakdown of discipline among his men. "I'd told the gun crews to stand smartly by their guns during the visit," he wrote. "I looked over and there wasn't a soul manning one gun position. They were all over getting their pictures taken with Monty and Churchill."

The night of 24-25 July 1944 would be the bloodiest in 30th-Battery history. Shortly before midnight German aircraft came over in another attempt to knock out the Orne bridges. Flares were dropped first, illuminating battery headquarters, which had been established in a large workshop. Then came incendiaries and anti-personnel bombs that shattered into thousands of fragments on impact.

Members of the battery relax during a brief lull in the air war at Deal, England, while the 30th was helping to defend the south coast against enemy aircraft. Bernard Dunn, the 30th's youngest member, is second from the right in the first row. Toronto Argonaut football star Don "Shanty" McKenzie is second from the right in the back row.

"All hell had broken loose," remembers Nick Hatten, who was wounded in the right hip, one of eight men injured in the attack, with two killed. "Trucks were in flames. Several of the gunners had been hit and men were running to take their places."

Major Smythe rushed out of his headquarters to try to organize a group of fire fighters. "Even in the confusion I was proud of the way my men were standing up," he wrote. "The night was full of gunfire, explosions, shouts and screams."

While helping to pull a burning tarpaulin off an ammunition truck, Smythe was struck ". . . a terrible blow in my back, either by a bomb fragment or our own exploding ammunition. I came to lying on the ground near the wall of my headquarters building . . . I tried to move but seemed to be paralyzed from the waist down. . . . The jagged piece of metal that apparently had done all the damage was still sticking quite a way out of my back."

Smythe's days as a field commander were over. During the next few months he had to learn to walk again, and his injuries would give him constant pain for the rest of his life.

Major Zouch Palmer, a former adjutant of the regiment, was transferred in to take command. The men took to their likeable new leader instantly. "He was an absolutely great guy," says Geordie Gill. "Like Smythe, he was always fair with us and had our best interests at heart. He was also smart enough to know that it was Smythe's battery, and always would be."

Palmer said as much in a letter he wrote to the convalescing Smythe: "It's a queer feeling to be writing as commander of the best Battery yet, to the fellow who made it that way — for me it is just about the proudest moment of my life, and I will do my best to ensure that standard will not be lowered and the 30th will continue to set the pace. They think the world of you, 'The Major' — in spirit the Battery will always be yours. . . ."

In spirit Smythe was still there with his men, still worried about their welfare. While in hospital in England he spoke to other wounded officers, all of whom complained about a chronic lack of replacements for men killed and wounded in their units, claiming that green recruits were being rushed into battle only to die unnecessarily because of their lack of training. Smythe blamed the situation on the fact that despite a large well-trained body of conscripts in Canada, the Mackenzie King government was still insisting on using only volunteers in battle, a promise it had made at the outset of the war.

Upon his return to Canada, Smythe charged in a front-page story in the *Globe and Mail* on 19 September 1944 that "the need for trained reinforcements in the Canadian Army is urgent", an opinion that almost got him court-martialed. But in the end the government had to acknowledge that Smythe and others like him were correct in their assessment and, on 23 November 1944, agreed to send overseas 16,000 of the draftees who had been trained for home defence.

Meanwhile, in Europe, the 30th had proceeded from Caen to Wassmunster in Belgium, ordered to protect an ammunition dump, and then in late October was moved to the south bank of the Scheldt River in Holland to provide support for an amphibious crossing. By December the battery was in Nijmegen guarding the Ravenstein bridge. On New Year's day there was heavy action as the Luftwaffe appeared in strength for the last time, attacking Holland, Belgium and France.

There was less need for a light anti-aircraft unit now that the war was winding down. The 30th received training on rocket launchers, but was soon back on the Bofors. In February the battery moved into Germany to provide covering fire during the clearing of enemy forces west of the Rhine. The last days of the war saw the 30th across the Rhine in the vicinity of Meppen, its guns pointed silently toward the sky against an almost nonexistent German air force.

It was time to go home for all but nine battery members who would stay behind in European graves. Back in Canada, the families and Conn Smythe waited eagerly to greet them. In the coming years the "Maje" would always be there when they needed him, with a job, or advice, or a loan. And every year until his death and even now in their memories, he has joined them in an annual reunion.

At the fiftieth anniversary dinner last November Zouch Palmer, now 76, repeated the sentiments he expressed in the letter sent to Smythe after he assumed command. "These were a great bunch of boys, with great discipline, all attributable to the influence of Major Smythe. I remember one time when a soldier snuck out of barracks and went drinking. The next morning he had two black eyes. The other fellows had decided to discipline him themselves."

Bernard Dunn was standing nearby. "Well," he said, "we couldn't allow anything that would have made Major Smythe ashamed of us. We loved the Old Man." ♦

Toronto writer Brian Kendall is a past contributing editor of "Toronto Life" and "Canadian Business" magazines and a former editor of "Where Toronto" magazine.

A Permanent Mission At Stuart Lake

By William O'Hara

At Quesnel Mouth — Two Hudson's Bay Company boats, with cargoes of furs, in charge of Gavin Hamilton, arrived here last Monday from Stuarts Lake, and left again today. Father Le Jacques and another priest are here en route to St. James where they intend to establish a permanent mission station.

— "Cariboo Sentinel" 3 May 1873

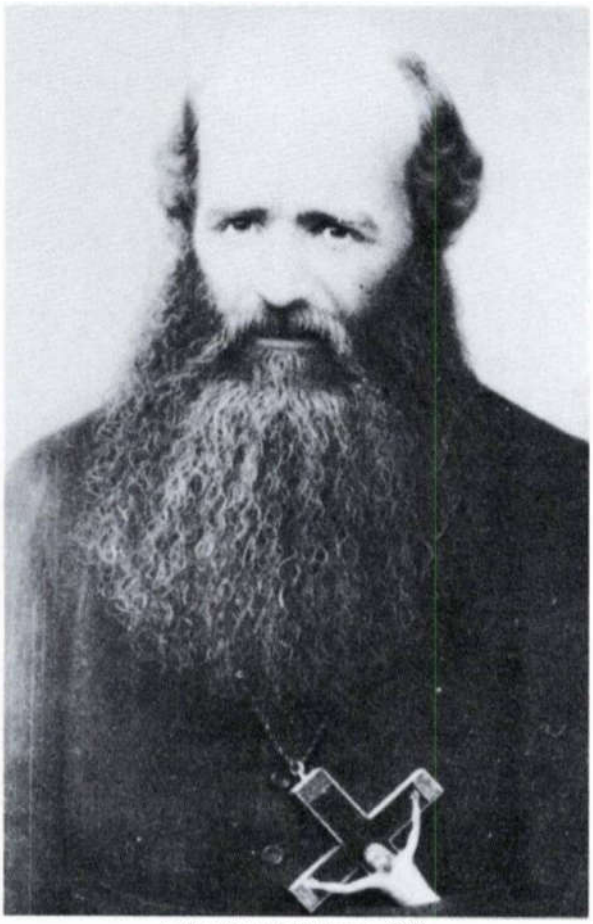
Since 1868, French Oblate missionaries had made annual visits to the Indians of the central and northern interior of British Columbia. Now, in 1873, these blackrobes finally had enough manpower to expand their permanent missions beyond Williams Lake. Fathers Jean Marie Lejacq and the newly ordained Georges Blanchet made careful preparations during the winter of 1872-73 for their momentous trip to Stuart Lake, situated near the geographical centre of the province. Fr. Blanchet was briefed on what to expect from the Indians, and was tutored in the difficult Carrier language.

Early in May, Lejacq and Blanchet stepped off the steamboat at Quesnel — the province's northernmost town — and began an all-important shopping spree; certain goods would be scarce at the trading post of Fort St. James. J. Reid's Terminus Store provided household items such as tin plates, frying pans and wax matches. Tools were also bought at this time so that Fr. Blanchet could begin building a house at Stuart Lake without delay. On his list were axes, spades, screwdrivers, files, door locks, nails and planes. Foodstuffs had already been purchased from Peter Dunlevy in Soda Creek — 600 pounds of flour, 200 pounds of bacon, 50 pounds of rice, 200 pounds of beans, one keg of sugar, 50 pounds of coffee, 50 pounds of salt, as well as dried apples, pepper and lard — all to be shipped north by packtrain.

Transportation for the missionaries was provided by Carrier Indians from Fort George. Their overloaded dugout canoes moved slowly up the Fraser River, which was extremely high because of heavy autumn rains and deep winter snows. A whole day was required to pass Cottonwood Canyon above Quesnel. Arriving at Fort George, Lejacq received a note from Gavin Hamilton ahead in the Company boats on the Nechako, saying that he now had room for the priests and all their baggage.

These boats, or bateaux, were well-suited for freighting on the rivers. Pointed at both ends, their overall length was thirty-six feet, with a seven-foot beam. The depth inside a boat was three feet, and when fully loaded with sixty "pieces" — bales of furs or provisions totalling 5,400 pounds — it drew only two feet of water. Each boat was manned by a steersman at the rudder, a bowman and six or seven middlemen. While the voyage from Stuart Lake to Quesnel occupied only two days, the return trip up the Fraser, Nechako and Stuart rivers required seventeen days. The men suffered great exertions tracking and poling and hauling the boats over rapids.

Hamilton, a Protestant, was a gracious host to the Catholic missionaries, insisting that they dine with him for the remainder of the voyage. On 19 May, the boats reached Stuart Lake. Here, in 1806, Vermont-born Simon Fraser of the North West Company founded Stuart Lake post, naming it in honour of his lieutenant, John Stuart. The post was re-named Fort St. James around 1821, at the time the North West Company was absorbed by the Hudson's Bay Company. Fort St. James was headquarters for a large trading district called New Caledonia, which roughly corresponded to the territory peopled by the Carrier Indians, and bore a striking resemblance to the Scottish Highlands with its lakes, forests and low mountains. This likeness did not, however, apply to climate. Winter temperatures plunged to $-40°C$ and deep snows made travel unthinkable. In 1828 Governor George Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company rightly called New Caledonia the Company's worst district, where privation was the order of the day. By 1873 Hamilton was predicting the demise of the fur trade here. The loss of the Company's monopoly in 1858 and competition from free traders had a deleterious effect. Miners in the Peace and Omenica districts, like Pete Toy, Twelve Foot Davis and Bill Cust, turned to the fur trade in



Father Jean Marie Lejacq, OMI.

winter if they wished to remain in the North. And the Indians traded in Quesnel when prices were not to their liking. For Hamilton, each delay and setback strained his nerves. He wrote to his colleagues in Quesnel:

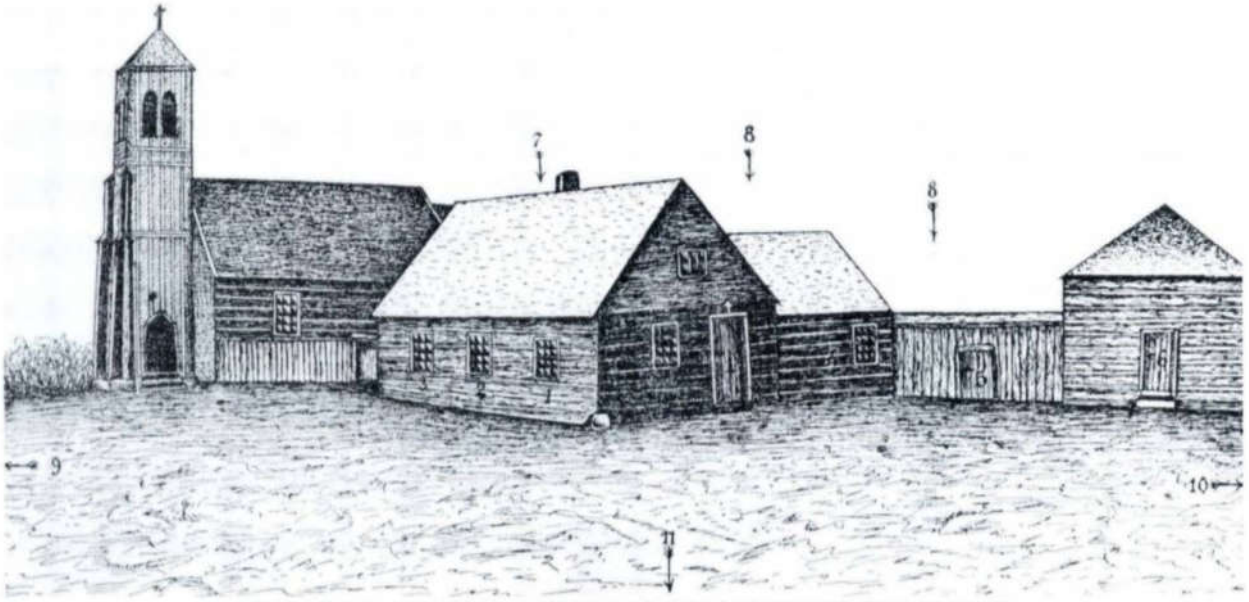
> I have lost this winter the best hunter in New Caledonia and his sickness kept 5 more good hunters from doing a stroke of work. I was very sorry for his hunt, and, poor devil, there is every likelihood that he was buried alive. He was kept four days in the lodge seemingly dead, and after burial he kept up a slight knocking in his coffin. After 4 or 5 hours I heard of the affair and made the Indians dig him up, but too late. He had changed his hands evidently, but had not the strength to remove the winding sheet. He was buried next day, and did not again kick up such a row.

Lejacq and Blanchet were guests at the house of Hamilton's mother-in-law Mrs. Ogden, a fervent Catholic who taught the local children their prayers and always provided food, lodging and horses for the priests. After resting in her care for several days, the missionaries pitched a tent that would serve as a residence throughout the summer and fall. Each day, after saying Latin mass in the Indian Chapel just below the post, they scoured the countryside for a suitable site for the mission. Armed with spade and pick ax, they bared the ground to inspect the soil, for a productive garden was crucial in this poor district. A pre-emption claim was filed for 320 acres of land on the lakeshore about three-quarters of a mile above Fort St. James where good water and firewood were plentiful. Although the soil was not ideal, Fr. Blanchet always grew more potatoes and turnips than they needed.

While Fr. Lejacq departed for Bear Lake to hold his first revival with the Indians there, Fr. Blanchet began squaring logs for a house. Poor Father Blanchet! Now fifty-four years old and suffering from blurred vision, he had come to the Pacific Northwest from France in 1847, and was known as "the Builder". Although he had been a scholastic brother, that is, training for the priesthood, he preferred the manual work of a lay brother, building churches and rectories throughout the Northwest. On arrival at Stuart Lake, he discovered he had lost all his papers and ninety-five dollars. They were literally without a cent, and had to buy seed potatoes on credit. But his trials were just beginning. Before Lejacq left, he enlisted the help of the Necoslie Indians who worked enthusiastically felling trees, sawing boards and raising the walls of the house to seven rungs. When the packtrain arrived, however, Blanchet was puzzled to find himself deserted. He was apprised by Hamilton that the Indians quit because they had expected a feast. What else would two missionaries do with 600 pounds of flour and four sides of bacon?

The missionary district of Our Lady of Good Hope stretched from Fort George to Bear Lake, south to north, and from McLeod Lake to Rocher Déboulé, near Hazelton, east to west. This large area was inhabited by 1,600 Indians, mostly Carriers, Babines and Sekanis. The Carriers were the most numerous and advanced, living in substantial houses and planting gardens. The Sekanis called them Arelne — packers — because the widows had carried the scorched bones of their cremated husbands in a pouch. The Carriers most favoured from economic and religious viewpoints resided at Necoslie reserve, near Fort St. James and Stuart Lake Mission. The name of this village alludes to the little arrows of dwarves who, according to myth, lived in nearby Mount Pope. There were twenty families at Necoslie totalling 120 people. The Carrier domain included villages at Fort George, Stoney Creek, Stuart, Fraser and François lakes and Rocher Déboulé near the Skeena River.

The Babines or "lippy people" living west of Stuart Lake were so named because the women made an incision inside the lower lip wherein they inserted a wooden



Sketch of Stuart Lake Mission by A.G. Morice, from his book "Souvenirs d'un Missionaire".

plug or labret. In time this labret caused the lower lip to swell until it covered much of the chin. The Babines, a sub-tribe of the Carriers, were characterized by Lejacq as being more material and not so generous to the priests. Gambling, drinking and conjuring were more prevalent among them.

The Sekanis lived in simple fashion near the Rocky Mountains. The nomadic Sekanis were the most backward, and somewhat indifferent to religion. They gathered at Bear and McLeod lakes to see the missionaries, usually in open air or in a tent.

For six months of the year, Fr. Lejacq's time was occupied visiting the Indians of the numerous villages in his district. Lejacq travelled by canoe and on foot, and at times evoked a quixotic figure astride "Chinaman" — a lame, scrawny nag. He was always accompanied by his interpreter and guides who conducted him from one place to another. Company clerks at various outposts offered lodging and meals to Lejacq, which he keenly appreciated in foul weather. To insure that the Indians knew the time of his arrival, Lejacq left with each chief a little almanac marking all the days between visits. The Durieu System — a hierarchy of church chiefs, captains and soldiers — was employed so that religious practices were observed in the absence of the priest. These officials were responsible for organizing prayer meetings and for fining or punishing transgressors who broke the promises made on their knees to the bishop in 1868.

Since the Oblates had made only annual visits from Williams Lake to these Indians between 1868 and 1873, the natives had been catechized in an irregular manner, and each village was at a different stage of conversion. Many of the adults had been baptised by Modeste Demers in 1842, or by the Jesuit Jean Nobili who evangelized New Caledonia from 1845 to 1847. Since the Indians were found to possess strong religious instincts — believing in a Supreme Being and a future world — they were favourably disposed to indoctrination. But in 1869 Lejacq experienced some uneasy moments at Babine Lake where his efforts were not universally appreciated. The following year Fr. McGuckin visited the North and reported to the Bishop:

> The Indian who attempted to shoot Fr. Lejacq last year came 140 miles to meet me and insisted on [my] accepting the gun as a present.

Certain customs, such as Carrier love songs, cremation and polygamy had been condemned upon the advent of the missionaries. The faithful took "the pledge" to abstain from liquor, and each village hoisted a flag emblazoned with the goals "Temperance, Religion and Civilization". Feasts and singing — those irreplaceable adjuncts of native life — were easier to Christianize than to abolish. Several times a year the Indians were lured to reunion centres to learn new hymns. Daniel Harmon, a trader at Stuart Lake long before the first missionary visit, described the music he heard at a Carrier feast:

> The airs of many of these songs which have been composed and set to music by their poets expressly for the occasion greatly resemble those I have heard sung in Roman Catholic churches . . .

When nearing a village, Lejacq's Indian guides would fire their rifles to announce the arrival of the priest.

The seeds tended by Father Lejacq and Father Blanchet took firm root at Stuart Lake and the Fort St. James area. The landmark Catholic church at Fort St. James, above, was photographed in the 1980s, over a century after the two missionaries made their journey.

At this signal, the whole camp became animated. The men grabbed their guns and powder and shot hundreds of salvos, while the others lined up behind the chief for the customary handshake. Lejacq then reposed in a lodge or presbytery prepared for him, while being briefed on the current state of the camp. Then the "tin-tin" man rang the bell to start the intense reunion, which lasted six to eight days.

Mass was held each morning, followed by religious instruction and review. After breakfast, about ten o'clock, the bell tolled again for more catechism and just before noon the session ended with the singing of hymns. At two o'clock another catechism lesson, and at twilight evening prayers were followed by even more instruction. Throughout the evenings, Lejacq dissolved differences, mended broken marriages, visited the sick and was available to anyone who wished to speak to him. The last day of the reunion was devoted to confessions. Apart from religious instruction, the priest gave general advice on topics such as idleness, resisting stolen articles and on the care of children and elders. Most Indian women adhered strictly to Lejacq's prohibition in regards to associating with whites who passed through the district. One exception was a woman from Rocher Déboulé who went with miners to Manson Creek, where she was subsequently murdered.

The residence at Stuart Lake Mission was roughly finished before the November snows of 1873. Built of squared logs with dovetailed corners, it was one-storey with a bark-covered roof and contained a kitchen, two bedrooms and an Indian hall which opened to the annex chapel by means of a sliding door. The bishop generously furnished a stove, but on frigid January mornings the mass wine would be frozen solid. More weatherproofing would be added as soon as boards could be sawn.

During these first years of residency at the mission, Fathers Lejacq and Blanchet contended with the foibles and faults of both Indians and whites. On one of his reluctant trips to Bear Lake, Fr. Blanchet was dismayed to learn that a dying Indian had been baptised with the words "In the Name of the Father and the Holy Ghost, Amen." When the little son of the chief there lay dying, a beautiful bird appeared from nowhere and alighted on the child's shoulder as he sighed his last breath. Just as mysteriously, the bird disappeared without a trace. To comfort the grief-stricken parents, Blanchet stretched theology by suggesting the bird was the boy's guardian angel, come to transport his soul to heaven.

Living close to Fort St. James had its disadvantages. One of Mrs. Ogden's daughters married Mr. Hall, a Company clerk. The Protestant Hall made all the promises required by Lejacq, and the wedding took place in the Ogden house, attended by all the clerks of the district. Two weeks later, Hall forbade his bride to enter the chapel. Hamilton offered no sympathy; he was at odds with Lejacq because the priest could not teach year round at the fort, thus forcing Hamilton to send his sons to Williams Lake for their schooling. He flustered Lejacq by threatening to send for a teaching minister.

At New Year's 1876, a battle almost broke out at Stuart Lake. Some of the engagés of the Company had been drinking, and decided to whoop it up on the reserve. One of them, Billy Favel, was caught and bound by the chief, Simeon Prince. Next day, Prince and all his people went to the post to offer the customary handshake to Hamilton, who spoke in a brusque manner and refused the chief's hand. Hot words were exchanged, but the presence of the missionaries postponed trouble until the following day, when the Indians seized the fort and held the personnel hostages while they ransacked the trade shop. Through the good offices of Lejacq, a dangerous situation was defused, and relations slowly returned to normal.

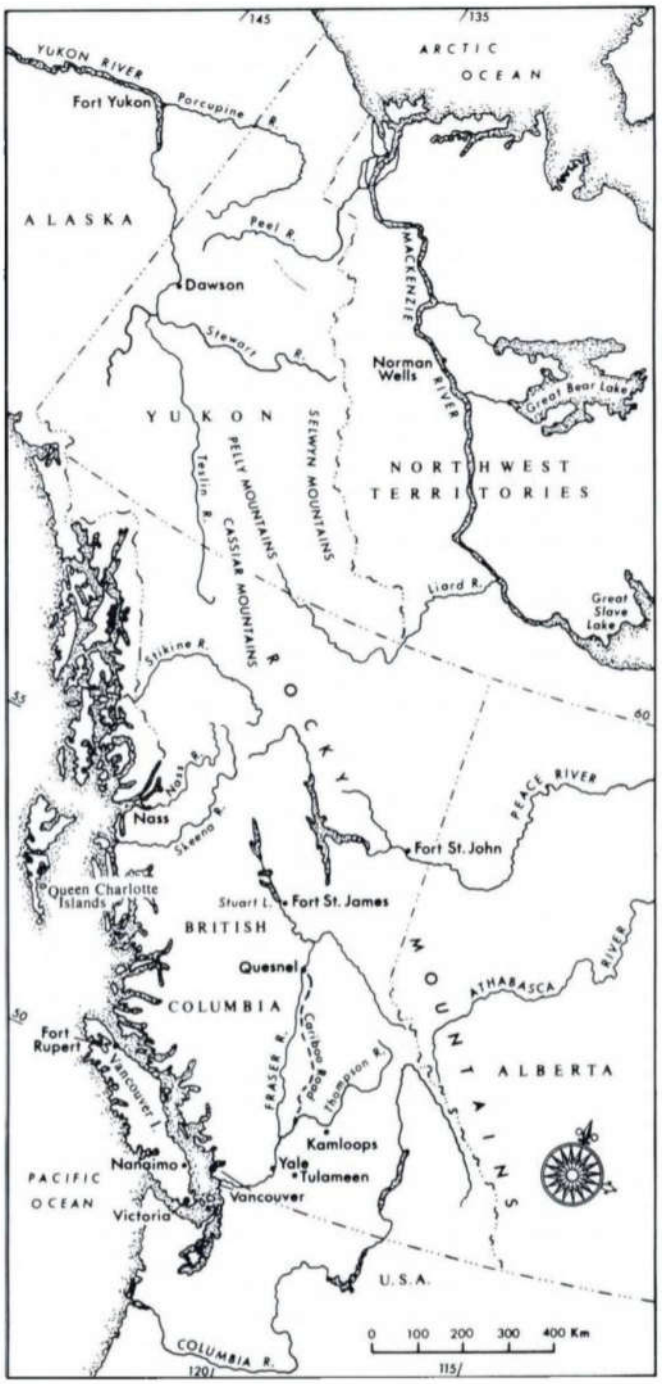
A constant conundrum for Lejacq was the problem of Indian debts. The natives of New Caledonia had been extended credit for decades, this deemed necessary because of the "feast or famine" nature of the country. But it was Hamilton's policy to induce the Indians to buy more than they needed. Most of them owed between 100 and 600 dollars, with no way of ever paying if off. From a theological viewpoint, Lejacq could not grant absolution to those who showed no desire to extricate themselves from debt. In 1872 he threw many natives into a state of despair by announcing that anyone owing more than forty dollars would not be baptised. Some cried in their lodges:

"There is no Paradise for us; we have prayed in vain."

In the end, Lejacq decided he would let the Indians and the Company manage their own affairs. But the missionaries would need financial support, and in a time when fur prices dropped, the Indians would have even greater sacrifices to make. Subscriptions totalling $863.25 were taken from Indians and whites to pay for a church, bells and other religious paraphernalia.

The Carrier language was another formidable obstacle for the missionaries. Belonging to the Athapaskan or Déné language family, Carrier was described be Lejacq as possessing more words than all the languages he knew. For the verb "put" there were 65,000 equivalents; there were six words for "give", depending on what was to be given, and many other verbs were the same. There are many composite nouns, such as *ne-na-pa-ka-rez* (people-eyes-edge-hairs-half) meaning "one eye lash". Since there is no "r" sound in Carrier, Pere Lejacq was called Pel Lezak by his native charges. For years Lejacq needed the services of a translator as he made his rounds. Fr. Blanchet, who had difficulty conversing in "country" or Canadian French, found Carrier forbidding. In a letter to the bishop, he admitted:

> I am so thick-headed that I have been unable to learn enough of the language to comprehend the slightest thing. And I am incapable of understanding confession unless it is in Chinook or French.



In 1876, the coadjuter Bishop Pierre Paul Durieu toured New Caledonia, in place of the ailing Bishop D'Herbomez, whom the Indians had hoped to see again. On 7 September at Stuart Lake, Durieu confirmed Simeon Prince, chief of Necoslie; Abel Nettedshas, chief of Tache; and Jean Pierre Yabbi, chief of Pinchy. The bishop inspected the mission and declared it the official site for the residence of the district. He then ordered the construction of a church 40 by 25 feet,

with a sanctuary and bell tower. The Indians would be permitted to move from Necoslie to the Mission on the understanding that they would never own the land they built on, and that they could be expelled for bad conduct. Nakazle, or Necoslie, had been marked off by Indian Reserve Commissioner Peter O'Reilly in 1871, but the Indians were under no formal obligation to remain there. In time, a little village of twenty houses sprang up at the Mission, and was called *Kessel kez yati* by the Carriers.

Until the Bishop's decree to build a church, St. Paul's chapel on the reserve had been used for all religious ceremonies. It was built just after the 1868 tour of Bishop D'Herbomez, and was blessed by Lejacq in 1869. At the All Saints reunion at the mission in 1876, Fr. Blanchet gave the Indians instructions for cutting and squaring logs for the new church. Although he would have preferred to build two frame churches to one of logs, Blanchet accepted the task with vigour, proudly assuring his Bishop, "It will be your Cathedral of the North."

Four times a year, general reunions were held at the mission — at Holy Week, the first week of June, the week before All Saints and from the fourth Sunday of Advent until New Year's Day. Most of the Stuart Lake Indians were expected to attend these reunions, but at Christmas, 600 to 800 Indians from all the villages of the district flocked to Stuart Lake Mission. Fr. Lejacq remarked:

> I believe these reunions do much good. They restore religion to the Indian's soul, and the fervour is passed on to those who are indifferent. The lax are ashamed of themselves; they are roused and participate in the general enthusiasm. A trip to the Mission for the distant Indians is like a pilgrimage to the Holy Land was for Christians of the Middle Ages. When they [the Indians] returned to their respective villages, those who stayed at home begged them to recount all the news and everything they saw."

At the Christmas reunion of 1876-77 all the villages sent their contingents to prepare logs for the church. Simon of Fort George was appointed foreman. He received instructions on paper from Fr. Blanchet and, after morning exercises, Simon led a long line of workers across the frozen lake to Pitka Creek where they toiled until evening. On the east side of Stuart Lake another group of oldsters and those not squaring logs made paths through the forest to facilitate hauling the logs already squared by Fr. Blanchet. Lejacq borrowed four oxen in an attempt to drag the logs across the lake, but the ice was too slick. So the Indians decided to pull the logs themselves, a distance of three miles. Before the reunion ended, almost all the timber was in place at the mission, just behind the residence.

While all this transpired at the mission, Hamilton and company were ushering in another New Year. At Christmas all the clerks of the district looked forward to a fortnight of festivities and highjinks at Fort St. James. They decorated their dogteams with polished bells and donned their finest attire — blue stroud leggings, white blanket parka and red Assomption sash — to enter Fort St. James in the most impressive manner possible; the others would be quick to criticize if anything was out of order. It was the custom to welcome the New Year with gunshots. As Hamilton was doling out gun powder to his clerks, a spark landed in the sack. Clerks dove in all directions, but Hamilton was left holding the bag. BANG! Windows shattered, doors blew open and the ceiling was scorched. Hamilton suffered burns to his hand, chest and face, but was relieved, upon opening his eyes, to find he had not been blinded.

Throughout 1877, work was slow on the church. Fr. Lejacq sent Billy and the six best workers from Fort George to the mission to begin building, and by June five rungs were raised. Hamilton's sawmill on Nahounli Creek provided 20,000 board feet of lumber which was used to finish a catechism house in time for the Christmas reunion.

During the June 1878 reunion at Stuart Lake Mission, the roof and bell tower were framed. The young men followed each other two-by-two to help Fr. Blanchet install the roof and floor boards. At All Saints, a large number of Indians attended the reunion: all those of Stuart Lake, and many families from Fraser, Babine and Bear Lakes. Simon and Billy worked from 1 November until Christmas 1878, without pay, when the first ceremonies were held in the new church — Our Lady of Good Hope. Since the early Indian churches were without pews, there was ample room for a large congregation. Stuart Lake Mission now lacked only one feature — the cemetery. A spot was cleared, and in 1879 Lejacq reported to the Bishop:

> Our good Indians want to have a good cemetery, and the people of Stuart Lake will want to come some day to rest in the shadow of the Mission's cross, awaiting the Blessed Resurrection.

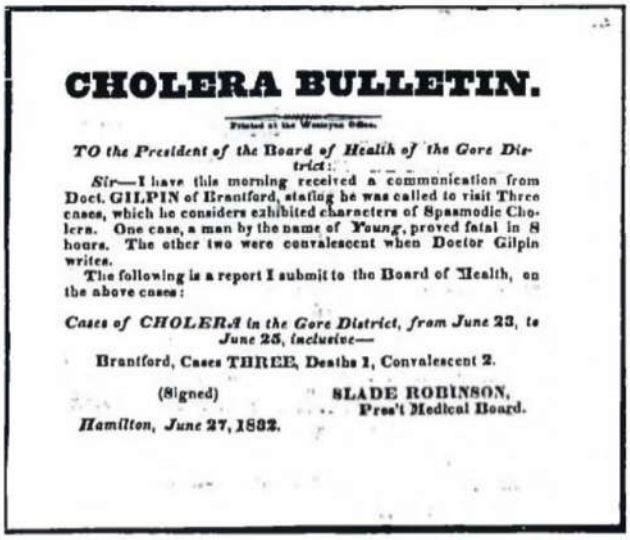
♦

William O'Hara is a librarian with the British Columbia Parks Branch, Prince George, B.C.

'In Sable Garments of Mourning . . .'

CHOLERA DEVASTATES UPPER CANADA, 1832

By Chris Raible



CHOLERA BULLETIN.

Printed at the Wesleyan Office.

TO the President of the Board of Health of the Gore District:

Sir—I have this morning received a communication from Doct. GILPIN of Brantford, stating he was called to visit Three cases, which he considers exhibited characters of Spasmodic Cholera. One case, a man by the name of *Young*, proved fatal in 8 hours. The other two were convalescent when Doctor Gilpin writes.

The following is a report I submit to the Board of Health, on the above cases:

Cases of CHOLERA in the Gore District, from June 23, to June 25, inclusive—

Brantford, Cases THREE, Deaths 1, Convalescent 2.

(Signed) SLADE ROBINSON,
Pres't Medical Board.

Hamilton, June 27, 1832.

"Heavy thunder and rain with much lightning," James Lesslie noted in his diary on Saturday, 16 June 1832. The weather in York (Toronto) had suddenly changed.

Nine days earlier, Thursday, 7 June, his diary made its first reference to the dreaded disease *cholera*. Lesslie had just learned it was "raging to a fearful extent in Paris (France) — Deaths from 600 to 1,000 daily!" In an attempt to reassure himself perhaps, Lesslie added, "it has been but little felt in Britain compared with other countries." His guarded optimism was also reflected in his entry for the following day: "The *Great Britain* arrives with 600 passengers . . . mostly English & Scotch Emigrants of a better Class than arrived last year."

In the course of the next week of fine weather, business continued more or less normally at the Lesslie & Sons stationery and apothecary shop on King Street. The proprietor purchased a "quantity of the finest Honey I ever saw in the country," taught Sunday School, and followed press reports on the fate of the Reform Bill in the British House of Lords. On Wednesday, brother John, manager of the family's store in Dundas, arrived in York, en route to Montreal to purchase new stocks.

On Friday, however, Lesslie noted: "Rumour says that the Cholera is in Quebec & that there had been 15 cases & 7 deaths — It is indeed a fearful visitation of heaven upon mankind & is calculated to rouse them from their apathy to the solemnities of futurity."

Asiatic cholera was getting closer. The epidemic had started in India in the 1780s and had spread throughout the near and far East by the early 1820s. By 1830 it had reached Russia and from there it swept across Europe. It was first identified in London two years later. In the spring of 1832, emigrants carried it across the Atlantic to North America, where it would spread almost unheeded before subsiding in September. That summer, government records reveal, some 5,820 persons died of cholera in Lower Canada, with at least a thousand more in Upper Canada.

When the plague finally passed, worst hit in Upper Canada was the town of York. Its population of just over five thousand had known half the province's cholera deaths. An estimated one person in ten died. (A comparable disaster today would be some two hundred thousand Toronto deaths).

As he daily recorded the dreadful occurrences around him, James Lesslie had no way of knowing what was causing the disease, how it was spread, or where it would strike next. He could not know when or even whether it would abate. All he knew was that something horrible was happening — and he knew why: "Terrible O Lord are thy judgements." His Scottish religious heritage interpreted everything as providential. Any disaster was divine retribution, the punishment for sin. Before God, a mortal soul was always in danger.

Lesslie was not alone in his fears. A month earlier, Archdeacon John Strachan, the spiritual (and often political) leader of York's ruling "Family Compact", had proclaimed a day "for a General Fast and Humiliation before Almighty God, to be observed in the most Devout and Solemn Manner, by sending up our Prayers and Supplications to the Divine Majesty: For obtaining pardon of our Sins, and for averting those heavy Judgements which our manifold Provocations have most justly deserved." Prayers and supplications notwithstanding, cholera kept coming.

As a practising Christian, Lesslie was apprehensive about the future, about life after death. As a practical businessman and conscientious citizen, he was also concerned with his immediate community, with enrich-

ing life and preventing death. In the years following his settling in York in 1826, his name was regularly to be found on the lists of patrons of the town's educational and charitable institutions. His diary for that awful summer of 1832 daily testifies to his compassionate nature.

By mid-June, Lesslie could see the shadow of death approaching, even though he tried to deny it. Rumours that cholera was in Montreal, in Cornwall, in Kingston, he discounted as "very probably Without foundation no authentic accounts being given from the Board of Health." Nevertheless, brother John decided to defer his trip to Montreal.

On Monday, 18 June, Lesslie's mind was still partly focussed on British politics. In his diary he expressed his dismay at the news "that the Reform Bill is Thrown Out! Earl Grey's administration broken up & Wellington again in power!!!! The stamina of British Freemen will now be tested."

The stamina of persons much nearer than England, however, was to be tested that summer. The next day, Tuesday, 19 June, Lesslie was forced to set aside all thoughts of politics for many months. It was "a beautiful day," but the "pleasant breeze from the NW" carried dreadful news: "Three Cases of Cholera announced by the Physicians to be in the Hospital in Town!"

Those first York cholera victims were "Emigrants by the late Steamers." The town mobilized to defend itself, Lesslie noted: "A Public Meeting called to take such measures . . . as may tend to mitigate its destructive power & Committees appointed to the various wards in Town to see that the greatest Cleanliness is observed."

Not that they had not been warned. As cholera spread through Europe, the disease had been thoroughly studied and reported on. A British Central Board of Health bulletin had been reprinted in Halifax "for the use of Magistrates, Clergymen, Local Boards of Health, Members of the Medical Profession, and a few private friends," in the earnest hope "that every Person into whose Hands this copy may come will preserve it, and give its contents every possible circulation." The leaflet described the "leading preliminary Symptoms" of the disease: "Diarrhea, Spasms, Apoplectic Vertigo with Nausea, imperfect vomiting, or various Combinations of these Symptoms." It advised treatment with opium, astringents, heat, bleeding by leeches, "cupping along the Course of the Spine," and "perhaps bilious purging". It also outlined the steps to be taken when an individual had been attacked: "the Room or Apartment . . . from which he may have been removed should be purified by scrubbing, lime-washing, free Ventilation and Fumigation by heated Sulphuric Acid and Common Salt, with Black Oxyde of Manganese, or the same Acid with Nitre or when these Materials cannot be obtained, by strong vinegar thrown upon heated Bricks. The Bed, Bedding, and Clothes should be immersed in Water, washed with Soap, and afterwards fumigated. . . ."

Upper Canada's Lieutenant-Governor, Sir John Colborne, acted with dispatch. On Saturday, 16 June, he called together the magistrates of the community "to take such precautionary measures as may be necessary to prevent the spread of Cholera." York town records reveal that a Board of Health was quickly appointed. It met on Thursday, 21 June and immediately designated health wardens to visit to every house in town.

The inspection report for the 7th ward was no doubt typical. "New Street . . . yard rather dirty dung &c wants removing . . . Barns & under them . . . stagnant water which might be easily drawn off . . . Tavern Keepers house in bad order very dirty wants white washing & repairs very much, yard & premises in a most shameful condition . . . Tenant complains that his landlord will not make any repairs . . . Duchess Street . . . a privy shelter overflowing & causes much offence & inconvenience to the neighbours . . . Water course on both sides of the Street wants repairs . . . Slaughter House [an] offensive smell proceeds from it, there being blood and other stuff near it . . . frame House owned by S Jarvis a very dirty privy overflowing . . . Duke Street: House owned by George Duggan in a very dirty state, no less that 5 families in the House, yard of which is in a dirty state Dung &c about it. In William Campbells yard there is a pile of rotten dung — a very dirty privy overflowing or very nearly so & very offensive . . . George Street . . . yard large pile of rotten dung . . . a drain wants cleaning out . . . deal of dirty stagnant washing water . . . In Duke Street from Bank to New Street the water courses want repairs . . . stagnant water, a dung heap, & draining running across pathway into street . . . yard in a very dirty state a large quantity of dung stagnant water &c &c".

The Board of Health agreed to issue daily reports. Innkeepers and persons keeping lodgers were instructed "on Monday and Thursday of each week to report . . . the number of [their] boarders . . . and whether there are any sick amongst them." Health wardens were "strongly enjoined to impress upon the several householders . . . the necessity of immediately calling in the assistance of a medical practitioner in the event of sickness." To this end, the board distributed a leaflet listing the fifteen "Medical Practitioners in the Town . . . for the information of the public."

Medical officers concluded that the main danger to the town was from immigrants. The next day, Friday 22 June the Health Officer reported he had discovered cholera on visiting the steamship *Great Britain* "on

her coming last evening into port." The Health Board quickly decided "to purchase and fit up [a] wagon . . . for removing sick patients to the hospital and that it be stationed at or near the Court House with horse and drivers. Also that a proper carriage . . . be stationed as near as possible to the place where ships come into port for a like purpose". The Board also recommended that the Health Officer receive a substantial raise in salary.

One problem, as even Lesslie noted, was that the "Physicians in Town are not agreed . . . neither were they in Quebec". Regarding cholera, physicians everywhere disagreed. They differed about its cause and about its cure. In general, there were two schools of thought. The miasmists argued that cholera came with bad air, such as that which hovered over marshes, stagnant waters, and refuse areas. York's muddy stagnant pools and mists over the Don River marshes were thought to be ideal carriers. The contagionists, on the other hand, were convinced that the disease was passed on through human contacts. They thought the best prevention was quarantine, isolating cholera victims from the rest of the population.

There were other, more bizarre explanations. Canadian medical historian, C.M. Godfrey, in his 1968 study of Upper Canada's cholera epidemics, summarized the several schools of thought: those who ascribed cholera to the influence of the sun and moon, those who believed an approaching comet was affecting the electricity of the earth, those who suggested that earthquakes exhaled the malady from the bowels of the earth, those who blamed poisonous air (malaria) formed by the decomposition of dead fish or animals, those who saw evidence of changes in the gasses of the earth's atmosphere, and those who speculated that the disease was carried by "poisonous, invisible, aerial insects, of the same or similar habits with the gnat."

Understandably, "on a/c of the bad news," brother John did not make his Montreal business trip. Instead he quickly departed "per the *Canada* for the American side to purchase some necessary Drugs." Both Lesslie brothers were apothecaries — both realized that their medicine trade was about to become very brisk. Indeed, the diary soon noted, "Camphor & opium have risen very much — the former 70 Cts. 2 months ago is now $3 to $3.50!"

Day after day, Lesslie's diary entries recorded the number of new cholera cases: 22 June — 2, 23 June — 4, 24 June — 3 more with "4 Deaths since yesterday", 25 June — "4 new cases & 2 deaths", 26 June — "6 new cases & 5 deaths". Not only did Lesslie cite numbers, he named victims: "Mr. Stevens a portrait Painter took ill last night at midnight & is now no more;" and "a Boy of 9 years . . . a child of Mr. Woods who Keeps the museum."

The Wellcome Museum, London, England

Recommended dress for doctors during the 1832 cholera epidemic. Protective clothing was augmented with bunches of herbs and other medicinal plants.

Lesslie also repeated stories he heard: "The Steamer *Niagara* left Port yesterday with passengers from below for Niagara & it is rumoured 3 of her Crew are dead on board of her by Cholera — She had not been allowed to remain at the wharves but out in the Stream — Montreal has had a terrible visitation! By late accounts business was suspended & people going off to the country in all quarters — The Churches closed — deaths 200 in 24 or 36 hours!! — unable to find graves for them! — but in one vast grave they put the bodies & cover them with Lime!!!!"

The Health Board continued its daily meetings. Convinced that cholera was carried by foul air, the Board instructed town inhabitants "to prevent the spread of malady by burning before their houses and in their yards pitch, tar, rosin, sulphur, or any other anti-contagious combustible at intervals during the day." A barrel of tar was placed in the Court House yard "for the use of such as are too indigent to purchase it for themselves."

As a deeply religious man, James Lesslie had no doubt about the reason for the deathly visitation: "This manifestation of the hatred of God against sin seems to be implied by the term 'Cholera' a derivative perhaps from Choler signifying anger — May we be all led wisely to consider our ways — to see the hand of God around us & to Love and serve him faithfully."

Metro Toronto Public Library

John Strachan: Prayer, fasting and humiliation.

Unlike many of his fellow citizens, Lesslie did not pack up and leave town. Nevertheless he tried psychologically to distance himself from the disease. At first he believed victims were only among the arriving immigrants. Then, when he saw the illness spread to town residents, he mused: "These cases & former ones have principally been unhappy victims of intemperance." He noted: "a Coloured man took ill yesterday at 1 p.m. and died at 5 under the most appalling suffering — he had neglected the premonitions of a violent [God]." On the following day: "I saw a poor man . . . put in the covered car to be conveyed to the Hospital — and now he is dead — Heedless of the danger to which intemperance particularly exposes . . . he had been lying on one of the wharves in a state of Intoxication all night!"

Wednesday, 27 June, brought reason for optimism: "Today the report is more favourable 1 new case & 1 death," even though, "4 new cases however are rumoured to have occurred since the Report came out." The next day, "clear weather but warm," also seemed brighter: "The Cholera seems by todays Report not to be on the increase altho there have been 6 cases yet only one had terminated in death." But on Friday, 29 June: "9 new cases of Cholera & six deaths since yesterday! — the alarm excited by it very great so that but a few persons are found coming in from the country but many leaving & going to a distance."

Today, of course, we know that the epidemic eventually eased and that life went on. But Lesslie and his fellow townspeople at the time had no way of knowing that. All they knew was the sickness and death all around them. They could see cholera almost every day getting worse. It might never end.

The town's authorities were trying to act, but like Lesslie they tended to see the problem as somehow *others'*, not theirs. They tried to punish: "all drunkards found on the streets taken up and put either in Jail or the Stocks." They tried to cleanse: "Houses occupied by poor persons cleaned & washed." They tried to dry the ground: "Drains making from the undrained parts of the Town." They tried to dampen the air: "The dusty Streets watered every day by means of Carts filled for the purpose." They tried to alter the air: "The burning of Tar, Pitch, Sulphur &c. recommended & adopted by many." They advised: "The use of the 'Chloride of Lime' as an anticontagion." They scolded: "Hand Bills circulated to persuade not to use Brandy — opium &c. as preventatives."

Initially, these measures seemed to have some effect. Saturday, 30 June: "The Cholera seems from accounts today to be on the decline an event which ought to fill all hearts with gratitude to *Him* 'whose tender mercies are over all his other works' — 4 cases & 2 deaths appeared by the Report of the Board." The next day, the Sabbath, 1 July, for the first time in two-and-a-half weeks Lesslie made no reference to the disease. Monday's entry continued to be upbeat: "The report of the Board of Health more favourable today than it has been." Nevertheless, "the various denominations have appointed special Prayer Meetings to implore the mercy of God in his awfull visitation upon our Land. The Cholera still raging in Lower Canada".

Wishful thinking was by no means limited to York. On 25 June the Gore District Medical Board at Hamilton produced a bold broadside declaring that "its Members this day . . . after a minute inquiry into the disease of Mr. Thomas Racey, are unanimously of opinion that his was not a case of the Asiatic Cholera, and further are happy to state that no cases of an alarming nature, have occurred in this neighbourhood". Alas, two days later, the same Gore Medical Board president, Dr. T. Slade Robinson, issued a heavily headlined retraction: "CHOLERA BULLETIN" reporting "Cases THREE, Deaths 1, Convalescent 2."

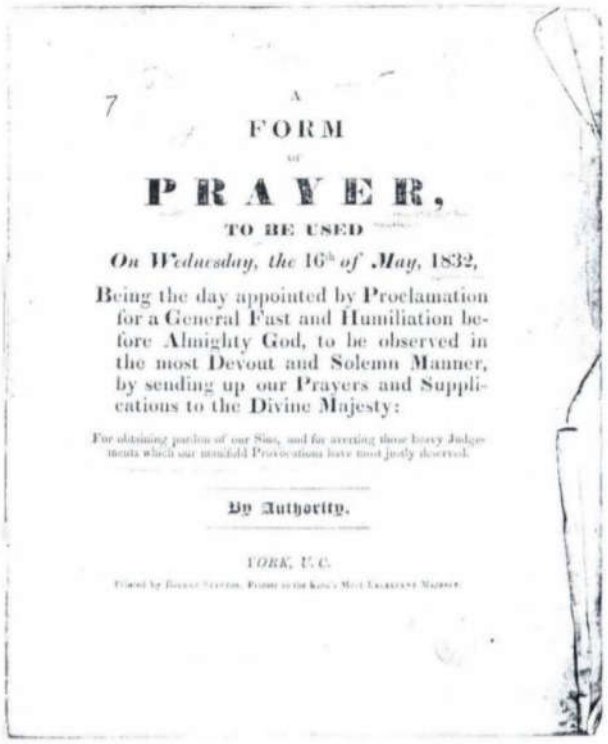
Lesslie's optimism was similarly short-lived. Tuesday, 3 July: "The Cholera Report is again more

unfavourable . . . alarm pervades the minds of the Country people". Wednesday, 4 July: "The Reports still unfavourable". To his dismay, he recorded that "the Pensioners seem to be paid today so many of them going about Intoxicated." Thursday, 5 July: "A Pensioner & 4 or 5 of his associates were carousing & became all Intoxicated." He died, "with Cholera unknown to his companions & . . . every one of them were afterwards seized by it and are now in their graves!!! Oh what a solemn & affecting warning to man & particularly to the Intemperate!"

If the spreading of the disease could not be stopped, perhaps relief could be found for those who suffered. Near the end of June, Lesslie learned of "a Recipe for Cholera which was witnessed to be effectual in 30 cases in Montreal viz 2 Table Spoonfuls of ground maple Charcoal — 2 Hogs Lard & 2 of maple sugar to be mixed & given at 3 doses — 1 every ½ hour." A week later he reported "This afternoon a man named Hewitt a Bricklayer at the Newmarket House was taken with it and died in about 2 Hours! The Charcoal remedy not given to him — it has however been successfully used in Town & may . . . be more extensively useful."

Very early on, the Board of Health observed that "several cases of cholera [have] occurred in Church Street near Market Lane." Its solution was to remove the people from the area, "take immediate measures for cleaning and purifying the houses and premises," and then allow the residents to return. Later the Board requested the use of the old school near the market as a cholera hospital. Colborne reluctantly agreed, but he warned of the danger "of inflicting a severe injury" by placing sick people in a wooden building in the area "where, even in a healthy season the effluvia is sufficient to produce pestilence, and where from the tainted atmosphere . . . the prevailing disease has appeared in its worst form." The source of the problem, as neither Colborne nor the Board understood, was neither air nor dirt. It was the neighbourhood public well in Market Square.

It would be another fifty years before medical researchers would determine that cholera bacilli are transmitted in water polluted by fecal matter. Yet in April of 1832, two months before cholera appeared in York, *Canadian Freeman* editor Francis Collins had written with amazing prescience: "It is really astonishing how the magistrates can allow the horrible nuisance which now appears. . . . All the filth of the town — dead horses, dogs, cats, manure, etc. heaped up together on the ice to drop down in a few days, into the water which is used by almost all inhabitants on the Bay shore. . . . There is not a drop of good well-water about the Market-square, and the people are obliged to use the Bay water however rotten. . . . There is nothing more conducive to health than good water



A

FORM

OF

PRAYER,

TO BE USED

On Wednesday, the 16th of May, 1832,

Being the day appointed by Proclamation for a General Fast and Humiliation before Almighty God, to be observed in the most Devout and Solemn Manner, by sending up our Prayers and Supplications to the Divine Majesty:

For obtaining pardon of our Sins, and for averting those heavy Judgements which our manifold Provocations have most justly deserved.

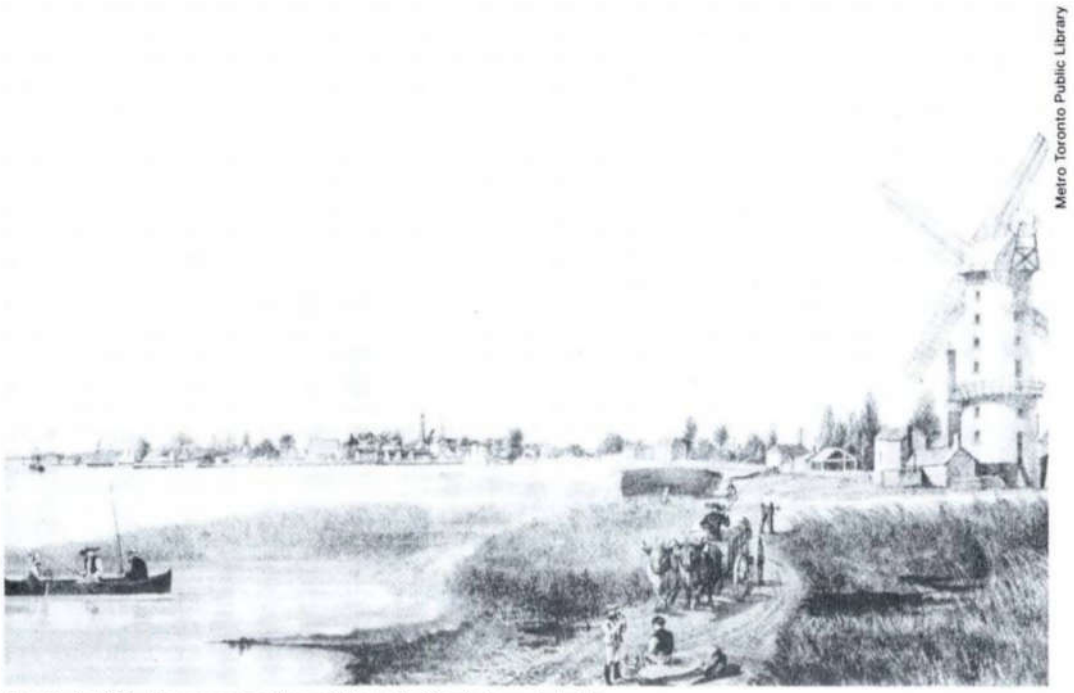
By Authority.

YORK, U. C.

— nothing more destructive than bad". Again, in May Collins commented: "Stagnant pools of water, green as a leek, and emitting deadly exhalations, are to be met with in every corner of the town . . . and the state of the bay, from which a large portion of the inhabitants are supplied with water, is horrible". It is tragically ironic that two years later, in a second epidemic, Collins died of cholera.

Day after day Lesslie noted the horrors around him: Sabbath, 8 July: "one young woman dies in half an hour!" Monday, 9 July: "No less than 10 cases of Cholera since yesterday & 5 deaths — 7 persons taken ill in one house & 3 have died!!!" Tuesday, 10 July: "one young man it is said took ill at 11 a.m. & died at 2 a.m." Wednesday, 11 July: "The devastations of the Cholera still continues around us and baffles the skill of the Physicians . . . Pilkington — messenger of the Govern's office — I have been informed is in his grave." Thursday, 12 July: "S. Shanklin's wife is in the dust but he survives and is on the way to recovery." Friday, 13 July: "This day Seely the Jailor dies of the Cholera — took ill this morning at 6 and was a corpse in the afternoon! — a rapid & solemn transition! May eternal realities be more familiar to us all."

From 15 July to the 21st, Lesslie may have been too awed even to write. There is only one diary entry for the whole week: "The town very dull — few of the Country people coming in . . . It has been a solemn



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Toronto in 1834, the prospect to the west from the Gooderham windmill.

visitation & is truly calculated to make all feel that they are in the hand of a Great & almighty being who altho unseen to mortal eye is evidently by His judgements searching his vast Creation".

The peril was everywhere. No longer could cholera be dismissed as a disease of the emigrant, the intemperate, or the impoverished. Everyone was in danger. Sabbath, 22 July: "This morning the Cholera car passed our door in the morning to convey some person to their long home — and again as we came out of meeting was it receiving the body of a man who had died in the house opposite. — how many cases may have been today I know not." Monday, 23 July: "Rumour says that this day 20 or 21 persons have died of Cholera in Town!" A crowd packed Lesslie's Baptist chapel that evening; the preacher's text: "while we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

Lesslie tried to go about his business. On Tuesday, 24 July: he attended a Young Men's Society meeting, but few others were there. Thursday, 25 July: "The prevailing disease the topic of conversation everywhere — it spreads around." Sunday's sermon was on Ecclesiastes "Better to go to the House of mourning than to the House of feasting."

From the beginning the Board of Health had tried to isolate the dying from the rest of the population. It strongly recommended (it had no power to enforce its strictures) that inhabitants "permit those sick of cholera to be removed to the cholera hospital, especially in those cases when the means of friends cannot provide them at home with lodging, airy and wholesome, or with medical attention."

Not surprisingly, however, inhabitants of York were reluctant to have family members suffering with cholera taken to the hospital. Such a removal was seen as an abandoning of hope. Many who got the disease recovered, but half of those who died, died at the hospital. It was hardly to be considered a beneficial environment. Even the Board, in urging quick burying of cholera victims, had observed, "it is the opinion of the professional gentlemen that infection is more certain immediately after death."

Clergymen in town tried to minister to those sick in hospital. Archdeacon John Strachan, in a letter to the Archbishop of Dublin, described conditions: "This terrible dispensation came among us like a thunderbolt and brought with it increased & heart rending duties. . . . Often have I been in the Cholera Hospital with six & even eight persons expiring around me but blessed by God I felt no apprehension & by my example arrested much of the alarm which was fast spreading. . . . Everything was done that we possibly could & I am confident that many were cheered & consoled and restored to health by my ministrations."

Lesslie also maintained his religious convictions, despite the daily reports. He believed God's will was being done: "This day Mrs. Knott (wife of B. Knott the Chandler) is laid in the Dust — last afternoon or evening it is said was engaging the society of some friends — took the Cholera in the evening & in a few

hours quitted this world! Were our minds uncorrupted would not every solemn incident of this kind speak to the heart of all with power & with a blessed influence? — It is from *Him* who opens the blind eyes and unstops the deaf ears that this can come."

By 1 August, the town was near panic. "This day the mortality by Cholera truly alarming there being 40 new cases & report says from 14 to 24 deaths! — Mr. Bell the Chandler cut off in 2 or 3 Hours — Mr. Bell the Tavern Keeper also among the victims — O that all were truly wise to consider their latter end!"

The next day was no better. "The pestilence raging still to a fearful extent — B. McMurray the merch't taken ill last night or rather about 1 or 2 in the morning & dies in the afternoon." Yet Lesslie kept his Christian compassion: "Met a poor woman on the street . . . crying bitterly — on enquiry found that she had come in from the Country with her husband to buy some necessaries & was now sorrowing over his departure to another world!" The diarist continued, "These scenes and the numbers clad in sable garments of mourning — spread a gloom & sadness around — may it be a salutary gloom! — a prelude to a morning of righteousness & peace."

Attempting to bring some relief, doctors resorted to strange new practices. With its excessive nausea and diarrhea, cholera dehydrates its victims. In modern treatment, intravenous feeding is standard practice, but injection was a radical notion in 1832. In late July Lesslie had reported, "old Jordan Post very ill of Cholera — his Physicians preparing that singular yet efficacious remedy resorted to in extreme cases in Scotland — viz injecting an artificial serum to the Blood into the veins!" Again, early in August: "This morning Mr. Fairbanks son is taken ill with Cholera & was in the afternoon said to be in a most dangerous state. The very singular remedy in dangerous cases viz transfusing artificial serum into the veins adopted & with some hopes of success." Two days later, an addendum: "after 2 or 3 injections he was delivered from the disease & now labours under the fevers which succeed the Cholera generally." How many others were injected is not known, but it apparently did not become common treatment.

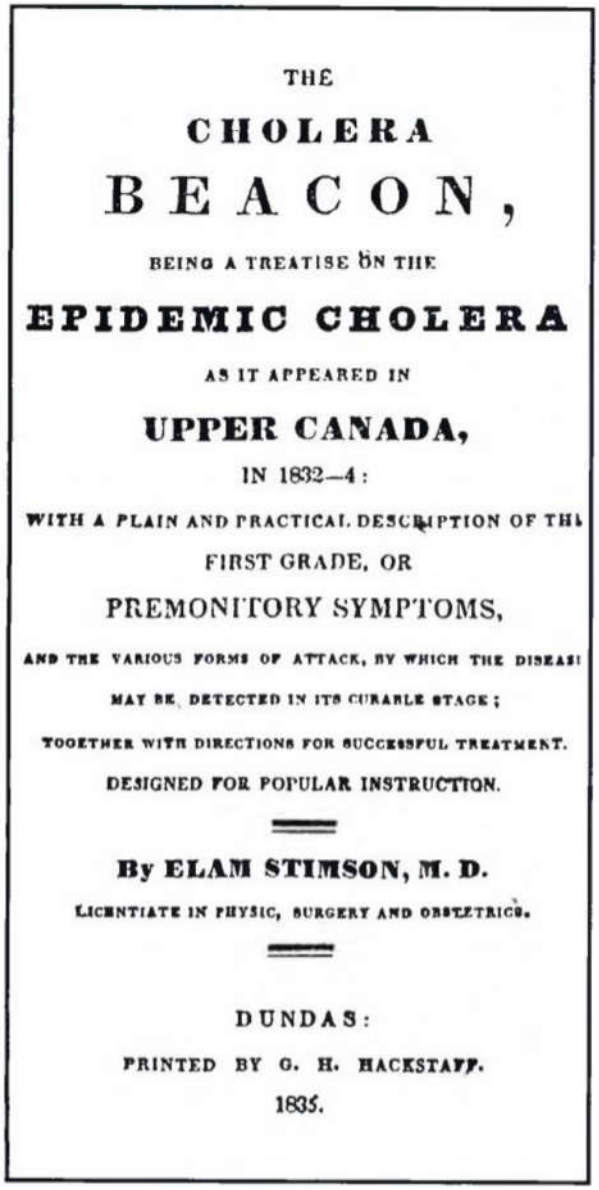
Sabbath, 5 August: "The solemnity of the present period forms a subject of almost every public discourse — 14 persons buried today! & among these Mr Baty . . . to whom I spoke but yesterday about noon in apparent ordinary health!!" Monday: "The Town almost quite deserted . . . the terror of the Cholera seems to have spread everywhere around us."

And then again a ray of hope, on Tuesday, 7 August: "The pestilence rather on the decrease by the last 24 hours Report — Quebec (it is said) now happily delivered from its terrific scourge." Wednesday: "No alarming reports about the Cholera today." But the pain and suffering had not subsided — and no one was safe. "Mr Giran dies and is buried today — He was a sober, temperate good man — and I hope has made a happy change in his entrance upon an eternal world from all corruption sin & sorrow — He was for many years a faithful servant in the Govern't House & latterly also a keeper of the Hospital." The shadow fell across the Sunday School as well: "One of my scholars — W. Emery — a fine youth about 8 years old was at school last Sabbath as well as usual but now is in the dust! — a victim of the prevailing epidemic."

Day after day Lesslie continued to name the victims. "Dr. Cathcart dies and is buried after a post mortem examination of the nature of his disease — Cholera. — Mrs. Carfrae's remains conveyed to the Potter's Field for interment this morning. — The Jailer in Hamilton dead, and all the prisoners except the Criminals liberated. — This day Cap't Bowket & mother die of Cholera and are buried in one grave! — Thursday poor Mackenzie the Watchmaker is cut off on about 3 hours illness of Cholera — a poor & helpless widow & 3 children cast upon the charity of the public by his death."

The Board of Health urged the town magistrates "during the present Extremity from Sickness" to make use of statute labour "in draining and even in cleaning those Yards still remaining in a State of Filth where the Inhabitants discover an indifference prejudicial to the State of the public Health." On 7 August the Board was tired. In frustration it voted a long series of resolutions, declaring that cholera "has within a Short period increased . . . to an alarming degree," that "Medical Gentlemen [suffer] with the very Labourious Duties, the public sickness imposes on them by day as well as by night," that "at the present time Several Nuisances Exist in various parts of the Town (Prejudicial to the Health of the Inhabitants)," and that the Board had "no authority by Law to enforce the carrying into Effect, or observance of any Salutary regulations, for preventing the Increase of the Disease."

The Board also complained "nor hath [it] any funds at its disposal" and "his Excellency, the Lt. Governor [has] declared that he has no funds within his control for any further Grant." Noting "that there will be ere long, Imperative Calls on the public benevolence in behalf of the numerous Widows & Orphans left Destitute by this Distressing and fatal Malady," and doubting "that a sufficient sum could be raised by public subscriptions for the purpose," the Board addressed "the Lt. Governor, Praying his Excellency to summon the Legislature, at the earliest possible period." Four days later, Saturday, 11 August: "Resolved that the Board of Health, being at length, fully convinced from their want of legal Enactment,



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EPIDEMIC CHOLERA

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IN 1832—4:

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DUNDAS:

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1835.

as well as from the want of funds — of their total inability to be of any further service to their fellow Townsmen, have this day Dissolved themselves as a public body."

A new Board was appointed, but town authorities were desperate. Saturday, 18 August, Lesslie recorded: "The Magistrates in order to have the Town thoroughly cleansed have appointed overseers to each Block for the purpose of calling a meeting of the residents upon it to take such plans as may to them be advisable for the General good to prevent the extension of the Cholera among the inhabitants." The next day: "Many cases of Cholera since yesterday — some say 14."

Conscientious citizens tried to help. If they could not stop the spreading, they could relieve the suffering. Lesslie gave time to "the Soup Kitchen as one of the Committee . . . upwards of 300 poor persons daily supplied with Bread & soup from the Kitchen." One person in twenty was being fed.

Hopes rose and fell. Wednesday, 22 August: "The Cholera subsiding apparently." Saturday, 25 August: "The pestilence not much abated." Wednesday, August 29th: "Cholera seems to decrease daily & perhaps the providence of God may now deliver this afflicted Town from its destructive power and may sanctify the terrible visitation to those who have been spared & unharmed by it." Saturday, 1 September: "The number of cases of Cholera have again increased." Sabbath, 9 September: "The Cholera subsides very much but visits other parts of the province severely."

At last, Thursday, September 20th: "The Cholera has it is said quite subsided throughout the Canadas and altho not entirely in the U. States has however become much milder and seems to be fast decreasing." Pious as always, testifying to the faith that had carried him through the summer, Lesslie penned a reflective paragraph, "These awful visitations to such as believe in the dominion of a supreme Being possessed of the attributes of Holiness and Justice appear not as a mere contingent effect arising from the action of some contingent cause but as a clear manifestation of His existence — His power — His hatred of Evil — a manifestation which bears or has a natural tendency to bear these truths with power to the hearts of men and to make them remember that they are but dust — that transient at the longest and uncertain is the tenure of human Life, and that therefore it should be improved diligently as preparatory to an unchangeable and eternal state. These ends being accomplished mankind may behold in all these afflictions the corrections of a gracious & merciful Father." One wonders if most York inhabitants would have been as sanguine.

The town had known terror for a hundred days, and James Lesslie made only one more diary reference, Tuesday, 25 September: "It is cheering that no cases of Cholera are now heard of — the period of this terrible visitation is perhaps now terminated. Confidence is now restored — people visit Town from distant parts and all moved on as if it had not been. — Fruit and vegetables are seen in abundance in the market." ♦

Toronto writer Chris Raible's last article for "The Beaver" was "Son of the Firebrand" in the October/November 1991 issue.

Rising High on Hot Air

By Michael Bliss

R.B. BENNETT
The Calgary Years

By James H. Gray. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1991. 310 pp., illus. $29.95.

R.B. Bennett and John Diefenbaker have been the two major Canadian prime ministers neglected by biographers. Would-be writers have been deterred as much by the unattractive personalities of the two Westerners as by their policy failures in the office. Except in rare instances where passionate hatred of a man becomes a driving force (consider Robert Caro on Lyndon B. Johnson), biographers are usually unwilling to spend years of their lives studying a person for whom they do not have at least a passing admiration or affection. Neither Bennett, the fat, pompous, millionaire whom Canadians came to loathe as their depression leader (1930-1935), nor Diefenbaker, a mean, paranoic outsider (1957-1963), commands such sentiments.

In time, though, writers are bound to come along to do the job. In Bennett's case, we are to have a two-volume semi-collaboration. Peter B. Waite, author of several excellent histories including a biography of Sir John Thompson, is hard at work on Bennett the Prime Minister. James H. Gray, widely-known as one of Western Canada's most prolific and readable popular historians, has worked faster, and now offers us a thorough study of the early life, *R.B. Bennett: The Calgary Years*. The book proves that Gray (fetchingly identified as "Adjunct Professor of History at the University of Calgary") can write exhaustively-researched scholarly history with the best of them. It does not make Bennett a more attractive personality.

Gray seems to have been drawn to Bennett because of their shared Calgary connection, because of the great impact of several of Bennett's depression-era policies, and because he had stumbled across some of R.B.B.'s passionate crusades, one of which was against his former law partners. Gray has done an immense amount of research in archival sources, and from it has written the most complete story we are likely to get of a New Brunswick-born Methodist who became a Calgary lawyer, got rich in the land of opportunity, and went off to Ottawa to do good for his country. Thanks to Gray we know how Bennett made his money, how his political career progressed from the territorial assembly to Ottawa to the leadership of the Conservative party in 1927, and a lot more about the kind of man Canadians would choose to lead the country a few years later.

R.B. Bennett as seen by Arch Dale of the "Winnipeg Free Press".

Gray seems to have reconciled himself to Bennett by keeping his distance. This is one of his driest, most objective books. At the end of it we are not sure whether the author admires his subject or not. A few readers may find themselves impressed by Bennett's remarkable generosity with his money, the subject of a whole chapter entitled "Largesse". More will be appalled at the man's vanity, verbosity, and capacity to engage in self-righteous vendettas. Able, yes: as Bob Edwards put it, Bennett "would be a very clever fellow if he did not know it." Also utterly humourless, self-obsessed, and a master of rhetorical hot air. During World War I, several observers thought that his passionate campaigns against Mackenzie & Mann and for his own advancement had caused him to become mentally unbalanced. "There is more to being a successful politician than silver-tongued oratory", Gray writes in a rare evaluative passage, "There is an inner quality that comes into play. . . . However that quality is defined, Bennett did not have it."

Gray does not say it, but Bennett's rise to the Conservative leadership was as much a comment on the sorry state of the party in the 1920s as a vindication of the Calgarian's ambitions. Arthur Meighen, a consummately stupid politician who has been hugely overrated because he attracted a sympathetic biographer, had left the Tories virtually in ruins. They had become a bunch of political humpty-dumpties, and hardly any one really believed that Bennett had the talent to put them back together again. Suppose that the Liberal Party in the next few years falls into the hands of Sheila Copps.

Gray's good work at a thankless biographical job now sets the stage

for his collaborator. Shall we hope that the next volume won't be a long wait? Should we encourage James Gray — what an asset he has been to the writing of the history of Canada, one adjunct worth six or seven associates! — to go on to Diefenbaker? Some would say that with Bennett he has already had a fate worse than Dief.

Michael Bliss is Professor of History at the University of Toronto. His latest book is "Plague, a Story of Smallpox in Montreal", published by Harper Collins in 1991.

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Some of 'The Few'

By Jeffrey Anderson

HIGH BLUE BATTLE

Edited and annotated by Dave McIntosh. Stoddart, Toronto, 1990. 178 pp., illus. $24.95.

Just over half a century ago the Battle of Britain took place and the story of No. 1 (401) Fighter Squadron of the RCAF is told in this unique, unvarnished day-by-day account, written as a wartime diary by the men who lived it.

The book is unusual on several counts, as No. 1 (401) was the only wholly Canadian fighter squadron engaged in the Battle of Britain. It was also the highest scoring squadron in the RCAF. In addition, never before has a squadron diary been published in this form — edited and annotated by Dave McIntosh who also writes a lively and informative introduction.

Under the command of Squadron Leader E.A. (Ernie) MacNab of Regina, No. 1 (401) squadron had sailed in convoy to England in June 1940 with the intention of providing air support to the First Canadian Division. But with the fall of France, the plan was altered and in August No. 1 (401) was pitched into the air war over Britain. The main base of operations was Northholt just northwest of London.

After an unfortunate beginning when the Canadians mistakenly shot down two RAF coastal planes, the squadron scored its first success on 26 August by downing three Dorniers and damaging three more.

Earlier, in mid August the Luftwaffe had begun an assault on the airfields of south east England in an attempt to knock out the RAF on the ground. At first No. 1 (401) was principally assigned to airfield defence; the ground crews often in as much danger from enemy action as the pilots. The squadron was in the habit of putting up three and often four patrols a day during this time. What with the nightly bombing of the airfields, no one got much sleep.

"The night was made hideous with loud bangs," the squadron's diarist noted on 28 September. Many of the pilots had to bale out at least once, but if not wounded went back to work the next day. The wounds suffered by the pilots were usually severe — burns to the face, hands and legs by fire in the cockpit, the engine ignited by enemy machine gun and cannon fire. But it was not just the hazard of enemy fire that the pilots had to contend with. An entry for 25 June 1941 records that a former pilot with No. 1 (401) "Flight/Lieutenant L.T.B. Little had a narrow escape when his dinghy inflated inside the cockpit so that he was out of control. He managed to pull the pin of his Sutton harness and punctured the rubber just in time. Some spikes are now being installed in our Hurricanes in case of future trouble of this kind."

The squadron remained in the fore-front of aerial action throughout the war and was particularly active during the Normandy landings. Altogether they flew 10,527 operational sorties, destroyed nearly 200 enemy planes, probably destroyed another 35 and damaged 140 with the loss of 53 pilots killed and 18 taken prisoner.

Some startling facts are revealed in McIntosh's introduction to the diary. By 1944 nearly thirty per-cent of RAF aircrew were Canadians. This large representation in the RAF was in addition to the forty RCAF squadrons operating in Great Britain.

Not all the entries, although well culled from the original, prove interesting. Even so they do give an insider's view of the daring action, the reverses and casualties, and the high-spirited recreational activities of this truly outstanding fighter squadron.

Jeffrey Anderson recently retired from the faculty of the University of Western Ontario, London, where he taught courses in the history of broadcasting. He is a former executive producer with the CBC.

The Historian as 'Hired Gun'

By J.E. Rea

MÉTIS LANDS IN MANITOBA
By Thomas Flanagan. University of Calgary Press, Calgary, 1991. 245 pp., illus. $17.95 paper; $24.95 hardcover.

To what extent does mastery of the past determine the present and guarantee the future? This new book by Tom Flanagan of the University of Calgary — the latest salvo in a continuing historical battle — is an interesting case in point. It is also a manifestation of a recent phenomenon in academe, the historian as "hired gun". Matters of legitimate scholarly debate are subsumed by struggles between governments and interest groups, with historians often serving as powder-monkeys.

To be specific, there is now pending before the courts litigation known as the Dumont case. Essentially, it is an attempt by the Métis to seek legal redress of an alleged fraud by the governments of Canada and Manitoba in which the Métis lost the benefits of the land provisions made in their interest in the Manitoba Act (1870) following the Red River Resistance. Whether they should have gone to court at all rather than seek a political solution is also a matter of debate, but that is a separate question. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in 1990 that the case should be heard on its merits. The federal Justice Department has been attempting to establish procedural roadblocks, so far without success. That is where the legal situation rests at present.

Both parties to the dispute sought the assistance of historians to establish their cases, Professor Flanagan being contracted by the federal Department of Justice. His task, he tells us, was not to build a brief but to provide an accurate account of what happened to the Métis land provisions of the Manitoba Act. There are really two questions involved; what became of the 1.4 million acres promised to Métis children by Section 31 and to the assurance given to Métis families in Section 32 that they would receive peaceable possession and patents to river-front land they had occupied prior to the transfer to Canada. Flanagan argues that the government scrupulously lived up to the commitment to distribute 1.4 million acres by lottery and indeed issued scrip beyond that to later claimants. He also concludes that any of the pre-1870 occupants of the traditional river lots who were prepared to wait out the delays and frustrations eventually received patents to their land. His critics argue that these delays — it took five years before the government began to issue the patents — so discouraged the Métis that they sold out and joined the dispersal westward before the distribution of children's allotments took place. In any case, these lands which then fell into the hands of speculators and white settlers were scattered randomly over the bald prairie thus preventing creation of a Métis homeland, which, it was charged, was the clear intent of the federal government. "Justice delayed is justice denied"! And so the arguments continue.

There is an obvious danger, of course, that history could well become advocacy; that historians, however careful and well-intentioned, will, like the piper, tend to play the appropriate tune. But it is also true that in the course of dispute resolution we are being presented with an extraordinarily detailed account of the history of the Métis of Manitoba. *Métis Lands in Manitoba* is well worth a read, both to see the historical evidence, which Flanagan lays out with admirable clarity, and to understand how it can be manipulated.

J.E. Rea is Professor of History, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg.

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North With Diamond Jenness

By William Barr

ARCTIC ODYSSEY
The Diary of Diamond Jenness
1913-1916

Edited by Stuart E. Jenness. Canadian Museum of Civilization, Ottawa, 1991. 902 pp., illus. $65.00.

When *Karluk*, flagship of Vilhjalmur Stefansson's Canadian Arctic Expedition (1913-1918), ran north through Bering Strait in late July 1913 one of the scientists on board was a young anthropologist from New Zealand, Dr. Diamond Jenness. He had been hired by Stefansson to assist the principal anthropologist, Dr. Henri Beuchat, in making a detailed study of the Inuit of the Coronation Gulf area, a people with whom Stefansson had lived and travelled earlier. On 20 September 1913 Jenness was a member of the small group (led by Stefansson) which left the ship, by then beset in the ice near the mouth of the Colville River, to travel ashore to go hunting. But on the night of the 23rd a gale blew up and the ice (with *Karluk* embedded in it) began drifting rapidly westwards. The ship was ultimately crushed by the ice to the north of Ostrov Vrangelya (Wrangel Island) on 11 January 1914; under the leadership of Captain Bob Bartlett most of those on board made their way to safety on Ostrov Vrangelya, from where they were rescued by the schooner *King and Winge* in September 1914. But Beuchat had opted to join a small party which set off on its own and perished.

Stefansson, Jenness and the rest of the hunting party made contact with the "Southern Party" of the expedition, led by Dr. Rudolf Anderson, which had reached the arctic coast of Alaska aboard a second vessel. Thereafter, while Stefansson embarked on his journeys of exploration across the Beaufort Sea and on the western and northern islands of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago Jenness, in the absence of Beuchat, proceeded to fulfill the anthropological mandate of the expedition on his own.

Arctic Odyssey represents his daily journal of the events of the subsequent three years, meticulously edited by Jenness's son Stuart. During that period Jenness covered a remarkable amount of ground. Walking and sledging with the Inuit he travelled west to Point Barrow and east to Herschel Island over the winter of 1913-1914; then he travelled east to Coronation Gulf aboard the expedition's vessel *North Star* in August 1914. From the expedition's base at Bernard Harbour Jenness travelled widely, on foot or by dogteam, often the only expedition member among a group of Inuit, some of whom may never have seen a European before; he travelled south up the Coppermine River, east to the mouth of Bathurst Inlet and north to Victoria Island, where he travelled and hunted with the Inuit in the summer of 1915. During these travels with the Inuit Jenness encountered several situations where somebody less tactful or less sensitive to Inuit attitudes and *mores*, might easily have found himself in an awkward or even life-threatening situation, but through his firmness and fairness Jenness managed to defuse all such situations. It should not be forgotten that the priests Rouviere and Leroux were murdered in this same area in 1913 as a result of tactless handling of members of the same group of Inuit.

The picture which emerges from Jenness's journal is of a tough, courageous, dedicated scientist who was able to adjust (almost) completely to the Inuit life-style and *mores* and displayed a truly sympathetic attitude towards the people with whom he travelled. He was frequently ill, either with recurring bouts of malaria contracted in New Guinea, or with gastric problems resulting from the inability of his digestive system to adapt to the commonly monotonous meat or fish diet on which the Inuit sometimes subsisted for protracted periods. He also endured the torments of mosquitoes, periods of near starvation, blizzards and bitter cold, yet he continued to make copious anthropological notes, take invaluable photos and make recordings of songs and chants. The result is a fascinating picture of a range of Inuit groups at various early stages of contact with the outside world. Jenness's meticulous anthropological fieldwork resulted earlier in an impressive series of scientific publications, most notably his contributions in the reports of the Canadian Arctic Expedition, which focus on the life of the Copper Inuit, their physical characteristics, their string figures and their material culture. His work also gave rise earlier to his semi-popular account of these people: *The People of the Twilight*, published in 1928. But now, for the first time, we have a detailed account of how that meticulously assembled body of scientific data and analysis was gathered. Although it had been intended that the first two volumes of the Expedition's reports would consist of the narrative accounts of the Northern and Southern parties respectively, in part due to personality frictions

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between Stefansson and Anderson, these narratives were never written or published. But *Arctic Odyssey* now provides us with the closest thing yet published to a narrative of the activities of the Southern Party. Inevitably it has limitations in this regard, since Jenness was frequently absent from the base at Bernard Harbour for long periods, but it certainly gives the reader some feel for how the party functioned on a day-to-day basis.

Stuart Jenness's own training as a geologist and scientific editor with the Geological Survey of Canada and the National Research Council has stood him in very good stead. His editing of his father's journal is meticulous throughout. Indeed if one were to lodge one minor criticism, it is that the notes (totalling 100 pages) are too numerous and too detailed, especially those providing the reference numbers to photographs housed in the National Archives of Canada which Diamond Jenness has mentioned only in passing. But of course the reader is under no obligation to turn back to the notes, if he does not feel so inclined. The maps portraying the different sections of Jenness's travels are superbly drafted and add enormously to the clarity of the text.

Arctic Odyssey represents a significant contribution to the history of exploration and pioneer anthropology of the Canadian Arctic. It portrays accurately, yet in a caring and sensitive manner, the lifestyle of the Copper Inuit at a critical stage of initial contact with the outside world. And it demonstrates abundantly that the slight, tough New Zealander whom Stefansson had hired to assist with the anthropological work of the Southern Party of the Canadian Arctic Expedition, was more than equal to that challenging task.

William Barr, a frequent contributor to "The Beaver" on Northern matters, is Professor and Head, Department of Geography, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon.

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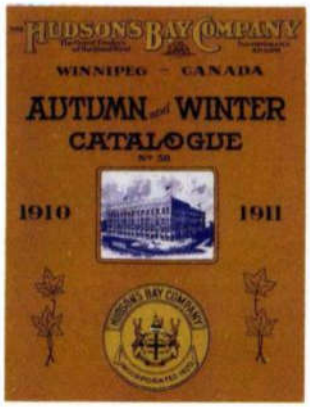

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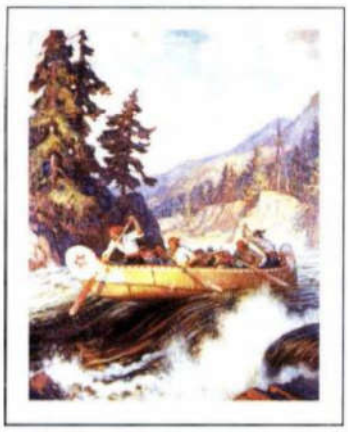

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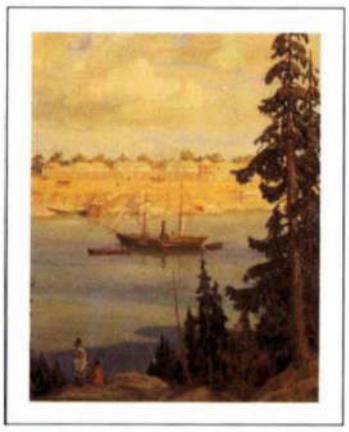
By A. Sherriff Scott.



B. *S.S. "Beaver" Off Fort Victoria*
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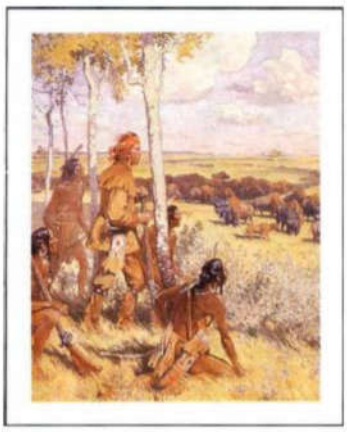

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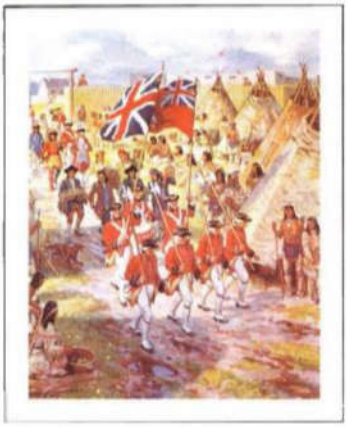
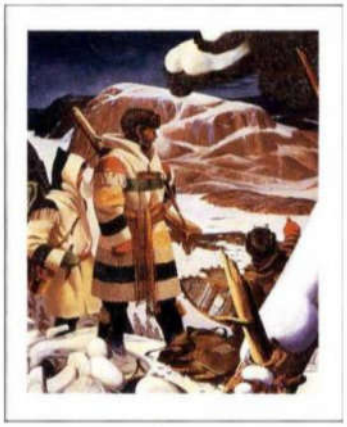


D. *Trading Ceremony at York Factory*
By A. Sherriff Scott.



E. *R.M. Ballantyne and Chief Trader George Barnston at Tadoussac, 1846*
By Charles Comfort.

F. *Battle in the Bay, 1697*
By Norman Wilkinson.

Over the years the Hudson's Bay Company has commissioned distinguished Canadian painters to create works depicting important events in the long history of the Company. Among the most popular works in the HBC collection are those pictured above by C.W. Jefferys, A. Sherriff Scott, Norman Wilkinson and Charles Comfort.

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The Old Burying Grounds, Halifax.

Allan Lynch: Old Haligonians at Rest

There is a new and, for Canada, somewhat unusual addition to the list of National Historic Sites. Halifax's Old Burying Grounds is the first cemetery to gain a national historic designation under a recent policy change by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board.

Bordered by two of the city's busiest streets, this small plot was chosen, says Lawrence Friend of the Historic Monuments Board, for the variety, quantity and quality of monument decoration and carving. Founded in 1749 and used until 1830, the Old Burying Grounds, also known as St. Paul's Cemetery, contain a rare example of pre-Victorian grave art.

The cemetery's first stones were carved by Massachusetts artists who supplied monuments to a wide export market. This supply continued until the American Revolution forced Halifax's citizens to use locally quarried slate, carved by resident stone artists.

While the traditional visitors to graveyards are mourners, geneaologists and historians, the Old Burying Grounds' Foundation — the volunteer group responsible for a recent $850,000 restoration project — borrowed the European idea of considering this a usable green space. The result is a quiet refuge with benches, new lighting and interpretation signs.

The foundation's former co-ordinator, Cathy Cassey, says the goal was to treat the cemetery as a park, as well as encouraging public appreciation of its art. While it is the final resting place for 12,000 of the city's first residents, the new direction is to consider St. Paul's Cemetery as an outdoor art gallery and museum. The 1,200 remaining markers provide an important look at the prevailing beliefs on death in the colonial era.

Judged by today's standards, some of the decorations might seem bizarre. Older stones portray death in a stylized form, employing winged skulls (called "death heads") and angels.

By the early 1880s, however, monument imagery changed from representations of death to bereavement. The mourner's grief was depicted by use of funeral urns, extinguished lamps of life and weeping willows.

Already possessing heritage designations from the province and city, national certification was important to the foundation and St. Paul's Church — which was granted the cemetery by the Crown in 1793 — because of the protection it provides against future development. The new designation will prevent further erosion of the site as happened in 1947, and again in 1949, when strips of land on the north and south boundaries were given to the Technical College of Nova Scotia and used to widen Spring Garden Road.

One of the more encouraging results of the restoration and refocusing of the cemetery is the number of school children brought here on class trips. Teachers show students this is something to be preserved and appreciated, and not a place to vandalize.

So in a new way, the Old Burying Grounds will continue to serve the residents of Halifax. The historic designation has been earned not for being the oldest or first — a sometimes dubious distinction — but for a new outlook and use of an historic treasure.

Writer Allan Lynch lives in New Minas, Nova Scotia.

Still Alive

I have just received my first copy of *The Beaver* which I find very interesting. However, I think the memorial service for Edward VII in 1909 was a little premature as he died 6 May 1910.

W.H. Anderson,
Brewster, Massachusetts.

Glenda Eden: Lost Villages

There's a kitchen garden lying fallow near the village of Dickinson's Landing. Scuba diver John Van Baal and a handful of others see the straight neat rows under 30 feet of murky river water. With bottles of oxygen strapped to their backs they explore the barnyard and the stone foundation of the farm house. Nearby, amid the rising air bubbles, they find the compost heap. The rich fertile soil hasn't known a harvest for more than thirty years.

The St. Lawrence Seaway and Power Project was a monumental engineering feat, but often overlooked are the small river communities that disappeared in its wake and the sacrifice made by the 6,000 people who were relocated. These communities have come to be called the "lost villages" and a generation that has never walked their quiet streets are rediscovering the rich historical treasures they have to offer.

Soon after John began diving this section of the St. Lawrence River he went to the court house in Cornwall, Ontario, looking for old maps and charts of the river before the construction of the Seaway. He needed to know more about the remains of the towns and farms he was seeing under the water. The people in the county records office told him there was a woman in the building he should talk to and sent him upstairs to see a court clerk called Winnifred Murdock, secretary of the Lost Villages Historical Society and a former resident of the lost village of Aultsville. This chance encounter established the link between what was lost and what could again be found.

A few years later the historical society began looking into the development of underwater dive trails. They learned of a marine conservation organization called Save Ontario Shipwrecks (SOS).

In early 1987 SOS-Ingleside was born and since then has discovered and documented several wrecksites, created three interpretive dive trails and found the remains of a nineteenth-century pottery factory. All of this was done by amateur divers with the help of professional archaeologists.

The goals of SOS-Ingleside, like those of other chapters across the province, are simple: discover and preserve marine heritage sites and improve recreational diving. Actively working with provincial marine archaeologists, SOS-members learn sound archaeological skills and how to explore and document sites without damaging them.

An important part of conservation is discouraging illegal wreck-stripping. Education and peer pressure have been effective and now fewer sites are being destroyed.

Now SOS-Ingleside divers are attempting to find new sites that will benefit historians and archaeologists and to maintain the dive trails enjoyed by an increasing number of divers each summer in the lost villages.

The most popular and extensive of the three established dive sites in the lost villages is Lock 21 near the submerged village of Dickinson's Landing. Built in 1885-86 to circumvent the Long Sault Rapids, it was part of the renovation of the Cornwall Canal system that replaced the old oxen and towpath method of getting goods and passengers past this unnavigable section of the river.

The top of a steeple engine sticking up out of the water near Cardinal, Ontario, marks the site of the *Conestoga*, the only wrecked ship dive trail maintained by the SOS organization to date. An impressive vessel in her day, the *Conestoga* was launched from Cleveland 6 July 1878.

In May of 1922 a fire broke out in the engine room while she waited entry to Lock 28 in the old Galop Canal. After being flushed from the lock she ran aground and sank where she still remains.

Documented dive sites such as Lock 21 and the *Conestoga* are fitted with underwater plaques that establish them as marine heritage sites, preserved and maintained for the benefit of sport divers.

Because museum warehouses are already full of marine artifacts and because extreme care must be taken in preserving them, it is often wiser to leave artifacts in the cold fresh waters of Ontario's lakes and rivers.

The work of SOS-Ingleside continues. Members pore over old maps and charts looking for clues. They consult aerial photos and ask if faint shadows in the old riverbed might be something important, something survivors might have seen when they lived and worked in the lost villages. And of course they do the thing they like to do best — they dive and explore and discover. The river people can now rethink the term "lost villages" because what was thought to be lost has been found and what could have been forgotten is now remembered.

Glenda Eden is a freelance writer who lives in Lunenburg, Ontario.

Taste-Wise

The first two volumes of Peter Newman's books on the Hudson's Bay Company did indeed please me, so much so that I sent away for a subscription to *The Beaver*, which also pleases me.

I wonder, however, where that puts me taste-wise in Michael Bliss' opinion?

Sarah Johnson,
Victoria, British Columbia.

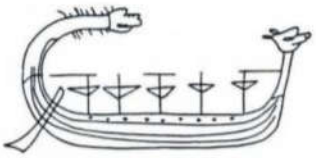
'Academic elitism'

I have been a subscriber to *The Beaver* for several years, and I enjoy it very greatly. My enjoyment of the December/January issue was much diminished, however, by the space you provided to Michael Bliss to review Peter Newman's third volume on the HBC, *Merchant Princes*.

The level of personal attack contained in this review is really uncalled for — comments which can only be called snide and unprofessional from start to finish. I don't hold any particular brief for Peter Newman — I thought this third volume wasn't as good as the first two. But my respect for him deepened by the time I finished the vituperation contained in Bliss' little hatchet job.

If the offensive academic elitism of Professor Bliss is the best *The Beaver* can come up with when it comes to book reviewing, I fear that you will be dragged down into the "dustbin of history" that Mr. Bliss writes of with such seeming authority.

Barrett Halderman,
Humboldt, Saskatchewan.



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Men At Work

What drives Canadian history? Caution, conservatism, and loyalty to the Crown? The railway and the St. Lawrence and the export of staple products? A vision of the North? These have all been ways to say that Canadians share something essential that binds us together.

In the mid-1970s, a group of young historians ignited one of Canadian history's most furious debates by proposing a more challenging theme. Class was their rallying cry. Class, they said, should lie at the heart of Canadian history. Class conflict, they declared, was the driving force of Canadian development.

These self-proclaimed "historians of the working class" were a youthful group when they first came to prominence. They were part of the post-war generation — most had been born within a year or two of 1950. From the time of their first self-published manifestoes in the early 1970s, they saw themselves as a new generation, and they liked to dismiss their rivals — some of whom were barely older — as the old guard. United by working-class origins and by common experiences in the New Left and student radicalism, they shared a determination to change the way history was seen and done.

Today, a couple of decades has left members of that "new generation" somewhat older and much more securely established. Have they been mellowed by tenure, honours, and a shelf of influential publications? With some of their key works being republished and some of their key arguments being reconsidered by still another generation, it seems time to look at the achievements of the "working-class historians" — and particularly two of their most prominent campaigners: Gregory S. Kealey and Bryan D. Palmer.

"We were aggresssively in conflict with the Canadian historical tradition," says Greg Kealey, recalling his undergraduate days at the University of Toronto. "In the 1960s,

it was not only the student movement. There was also that expansion that let different kinds of people get to university. If I had been born a decade earlier, I would never have got to university. So we wanted our own past as opposed to someone else's. We were on voyages of rediscovery. There were workers in Canadian history and we wanted to discover them. I felt a lot of antagonism to the University of Toronto and the whole idea of history that dominated there . . . teaching the elite and about the elites."

However, Kealey never felt isolated in his opposition. "There was that whole late-sixties milieu of people from the student movement, the anti-Leninist New Left, political groups who shared an underlying set of assumptions but also had ambitions for good history, to make something more than books to sit on a professor's shelf." In 1972 he and others began assembling a source-list for working-class history. "We financed it with those OFY-LIP grants that were around in those days, and we typeset it ourselves. That developed into *Essays in Canadian Working-Class History*, edited by Peter Warrian and me, in 1976."

The essay collection brought Kealey into contact with Bryan Palmer. Palmer had discovered history by a different route, after dropping out of undergraduate studies in London, Ontario, his home town. "It was in New York City, outside of university, that I first read history seriously. There was a thing called the Alternate University where you could take drop-in courses — the best history courses I ever took."

By 1975, both Kealey and Palmer were doing graduate studies at American universities, Palmer on the workers of Hamilton in the late 1800s, Kealey on Toronto workers in the same period. When those books were done, they collaborated on *Dreaming of What Might Be*, a history of the Knights of Labour, who in the 1800s tried to unite North American workers into one united working-class movement.

"We didn't agree on every point of where we were going, but we had a clear sense of what we were against," says Palmer. "We were against the traditional, institutional, straight political history of labour. We were committed to doing working-class history." Each was determined NOT to write the history of unions and strikes — which

was how they characterized the old labour history. "We wanted a broad social-history approach to working people, not just labour politics," says Kealey. "Not that we were not interested in politics, obviously, but we wanted to put it in the social context of the history of class and class conflict."

"Class experience appears in so many forms, in the way people lived and organized their lives, not just how they worked." says Craig Heron, another member of the group. "What I have looked at is how patterns of lives are put together, how people lived lives in class-defined ways. Why didn't working-class kids stay in school? Because they had to contribute to the family economy. It means there is not the same individualism that we take for granted. But this family economy also means the family unit is much more central in working people's lives than the union, despite all the attention given to unions."

To show there had been a working-class culture behind the union organizing and the strikes of the late 1800s, Kealey and Palmer and their allies tried to study working-class men and women in Toronto and Hamilton (and soon in Montreal and Winnipeg and Halifax as well) not just as workers and union members on the job, but also as "citizens, family members, neighbours, and advocates of change".

For the self-styled "new generation," this working-class culture was the subject that excited them, for culture was how class revealed itself. "We have 'excavated' enough evidence, enough instances of a class presence in this country," declares Bryan Palmer. "We have shown that class is not only in the workplace. It's not only unions, strikes, and political activity. Class is there in all kinds of experience."

Even as they worked to unearth the story of forgotten working-class societies, the new generation was also engaged in a wrecking operation against an alternate kind of labour history. "The alternative was a kind of alphabet soup of different unions and when they were founded," says Kealey. It was attacks on "alphabet soup" labour history that touched off the great debate, a debate that pitted them mostly against other left-wing historians.

A history of unionism versus a history of working-class cultures might seem a narrow ground for so fierce a battle. But a fundamental issue divided the two camps. Those who studied unions and institutions had tended to be social-democratic and reform-minded, while their challengers came out of more radical movements — and were committed to Marxism. Really, says Craig Heron, "Marxism was the point of difference. At a conference in 1981, David Bercuson declared that Canadian working-class history is not driven by class conflict. And Greg Kealey said yes it is. And that really has been the difference."

Kealey and Palmer and their allies dismissed any version of working-class history that was not a Marxist analysis of class struggle. They intended to show not only that Canadian workers shared a common working-class culture, but also that this class was in conflict with the forces that controlled Canadian society. For Marxists, class conflict is the fundamental force driving history. "There can be no other useful notion" is the way Kealey summarized class in 1978.

Their critics, including historian David Bercuson (just three years older than Kealey, in fact), simply did not buy that. Workers acted "as much from consciousness of job, place, church, ethnic group and other factors as from a culture of class," wrote Bercuson in 1981. And although the Marxists talked so much of working-class culture, Bercuson and others argued they still had to prove that working people "were bound by common culture that was primarily their class experience" — before they could use culture to explain anything.

"The debate was harsher and more direct than maybe anything in English-Canadian historiography," recalls Craig Heron. It was fought in articles and book reviews and over control of the flagship journal *Labour/Le Travailleur*. No doubt it influenced who got hired for teaching jobs in the universities. There was even a libel action. But once the fundamental statements had been made, there was little chance of a resolution and nowhere to go. "And then it all died down," says Heron. "The older group seemed to move on to other historical fields, to ethnicity, to diplomatic history and political commentary and so on. And we had our own debates and issues to preoccupy us."

David Bercuson believes the historians of the working class had much to offer. "The problem was their attitude that 'We are the only ones who have the kingdom of heaven.' They were incredibly arrogant. We could be interested in what they had to say, but they wanted to sweep aside anyone who disagreed with them." In Bercuson's view, it was his opponents' determination to create a bipolar academic world, Marxists versus non-Marxists, that made debate impossible. "You always found yourself being criticized, not for what you said, but for your ideological position."

Today Greg Kealey talks of that debate with a gusto that suggests more than the issues themselves were at stake. In the fight for Canadian working-class history, Kealey displayed formidable organizing talents. While still a graduate student, he was putting together publications and helping to found *Labour/Le Travailleur*, which he has directed ever since (itself an extraordinary record, since most scholarly journals rotate editors frequently). As a teacher, first at Dalhousie University in Halifax, later at Memorial University of Newfoundland, he helped bring

forth a flowering of working-class studies throughout Atlantic Canada. He has run committees, organized conferences, and planned texts and essay collections. And clearly he is a relentless networker. Within a day of my first phone call about this article, he had been on the phone to Bryan Palmer in Kingston, Ontario, and without knowing much about these columns, he was soon suggesting future topics I might cover.

For Kealey, perhaps, the battle for working-class history was also the opportunity for a student, who as an undergraduate had been dissident and dissatisfied, who had actually left Canada in search of a more meaningful kind of history, to come back and confront the historical community and to carve out a space in which he and his allies felt comfortable.

Efforts like those — and also a long list of much-honoured books and articles — have by now made working-class history an established part of the Canadian historical scene. "Working-class history forces discussion of class relations," says Kealey. "By putting that on the agenda, we have had our influence. I think the undergraduate survey of Canadian history in most universities would be very different in that respect from the one offered twenty-five years ago."

Still, for Kealey and others, the old emphasis on class is more clearly mingled with other factors. Craig Heron, underlining the impact feminist scholars have had on studies of culture and families, suggests many historians of the working class would now call themselves "Marxists-and-feminists." Kealey now speaks of a "small-m marxism," attentive to gender, ethnicity, and region as well as class. These statements are more nuanced than those of fifteen years ago. Indeed, when they stress that class is not everything and that culture is complicated, it may seem that some of the "new" generation have discovered the ideas of those they criticized most fiercely.

But not all of them. This seemed to have the makings of a story of how a group of young dissidents came in full of crusading zeal, and how they accommodated as they matured, won victories, and made room for themselves and their views in the historical community.

Then I talked to Bryan Palmer. If Kealey was the movement's general, Palmer was its weapons-master, the one who launched the harshest attacks on its foes. He does not see himself as mellowed.

"I consider myself on the margins of the historical profession," Palmer says. "I have a job at a prestigious university, I suppose" (he is professor at Queen's University in Kingston) "but I am probably more outspokenly Marxist and dissident than most of the others." He remains a friend and co-author and co-worker of Greg Kealey, but he does not share his concept of small-m marxism.

"Greg wants all those hyphens," Palmer says. "Greg wants to celebrate that pluralism. I practise it with my students, but I know where I stand. I am sympathetic to feminism, and ecology, and regional and ethnic projects, that have been so influential in recent years. But all these movements cannot change the exploitative nature of capitalism. That must come through the working class. There cannot be any fundamental change without the working class." Evidently debates in working-class history are not over.

Oddly enough, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union hardly seems important to those debates. "I was never a strong supporter of the Soviet Union," says one of them with ironic understatement, and indeed they all grew up in left-wing traditions far removed from the Soviet orthodoxy. Since their field is Canada, they have been more interested in how capitalism creates social classes — a process that may be just about to begin in Eastern Europe.

What does the history of working-class culture suggest about Canada today, in the midst of an economic restructuring that may mean the end of the southern Ontario industries that emerged — along with Kealey and Palmer's working class — in the 1880s? "Something that defines working-class people is their absolute dependence on wage-earning — plus the instability of wage labour," says Craig Heron. "That uncertainty is fundamental. Necessity, scarcity are always there. You can see its results in pettiness and gouging, but also in cohesion and mutual support."

And how does the history of workers a century ago illuminate present-day concerns? "I think it is always worthwhile to mention that historical writing is related to the context of the times" says Greg Kealey. "The struggle for control is also the struggle for meaning. If we are fighting about meaning, that is worth fighting about." ♦

Gregory S. Kealey's book "Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism", first published in 1980, was reprinted last year by University of Toronto Press. A new edition of Bryan D. Palmer's "Working Class Experience", first published in 1983, has just been published by McClelland and Stewart.

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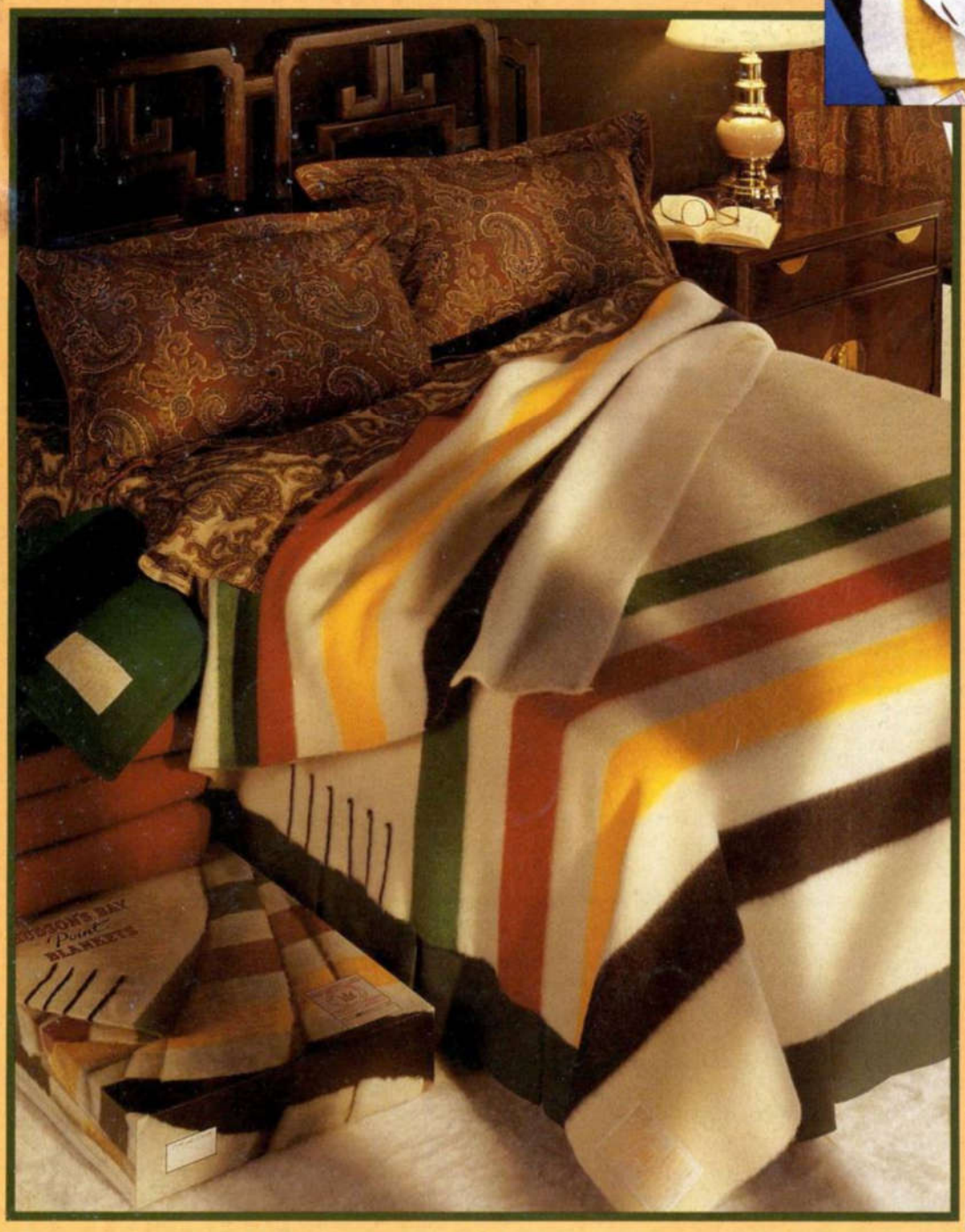

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